

From: michaeljkeating@compuserve.com  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: michaeljkeating@compuserve.com  
To:  
Date: Sat, 10 Jul 1999 08:53:27 -0400  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <199907100853\_MC2-7C81-2E00@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Read

My dear

No sweat about writing. When you have the chance, wonderful.  
Wh=  
en  
you don't, I understand. =

I think your Mom's job is a gift from God, but it will no doubt  
take some time to sort out schedules and the rhythm of the house. And  
as=

always a lot of the burden falls on lovely . But that's partly  
because you can handle it. Do your best not to fret about it. I know  
it=

creates stress, but it will help if you keep in mind that nothing can  
really go very wrong, and you are a delight to your parents and to your  
Father in heaven, so you can relax and just take things as they come.

Thanks for your prayers. Keep it up, I need em. I'll do the  
sam=  
e  
for you.

Rome? Rome is, well, noisy, and kind of dirty, and packed with  
people, and all jumbled together. It's the sort of place that grows on  
y=  
ou  
over time. When you first see it you think it's interesting but not  
real=  
ly  
very attractive. Not carefully laid out, with gracious avenues and wide  
parks and leafy trees. Instead it's narrow cobbled streets, many of  
whic=  
h  
have no sidewalk, and old buildings that look shabby and in need of  
paint=  
,  
and old ruins right in the midst of the city. But after awhile the  
place=

begins to worm its way into your heart. The really enchanted places in  
Rome are the ones you can't easily see. Most Roman buildings have  
courtyards, so they present walls on all sides to the street, but if you  
=  
go  
inside you find that the whole inner space is a garden, quiet, secret,  
cool, inviting. Like the place I'm staying. It used to be a convent,  
an=  
d

then it was given to the priests of North America who study in Rome.

Fro=

m

the outside it's just a four-story building, of no architectural interest=

,  
and looks old and ramshackle. You go inside the narrow door, and under a=

kind of tunnel, and you come out into a lovely garden, with paths, and a couple of fountains, and a portico running along one side (that's one of those porches built under the second floor, so you can sit there in the rain.) It's full of flowers and vines and trees and benches. A lovely spot, away from the honking noise of the streets. And so it is all over Rome. The outside is nothing special. The inside enchants.

But of course there are some amazing things even from the outside=

. =

I'm about a three minute walk from the Trevi fountain. You remember this=

from "Roman Holiday?" It's the one you throw coins into. Quite somethin=

g,

because it's tucked away around a bunch of back corners and narrow street=

s,

and then you come across what amounts to a whole side of a building gushi=

ng

water, huge statues of neptune, a pool, and splashing spraying water from=

dozens of sources. One of Rome's underground streams comes to the surfac=

e

here so they built the big fountain to make a splash with it. (Hah.)

An=

d

of course St. Peter's is massive and impressive. I've been taking walks every day just to acquaint myself with the city.

Otherwise I study my Italian, and I work on a few projects, and I=

wish I could see friends. Travel is always a bit lonely, because you get=

thrown out of your normal course of life, and you can't just call up a friend and pop over to see him. On the other hand, it's good for meditation. Lots of time with your thoughts, and lots of new things to think about.

Keep chin up, dear . Patience and love will bring you peace=

in the midst even of the home.

I miss you. And love you lots. Give a kiss for me.

Your favorite Doctor. =

From: michaeljkeating@compuserve.com  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: michaeljkeating@compuserve.com  
To:  
Date: Tue, 13 Jul 1999 14:44:09 -0400  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <199907131444\_MC2-7CD4-88B3@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Read

Lovely

What great news that you will be spending some time in New York!

I think you absolutely should go. You can use not only a break in the action, but a different look at some things. New York is a really cool city, even though I wouldn't want to live there. People from every corner of the globe, huge buildings, neat parks, lots of interest, and how fun you to be with your fun cousins. You must go! You will come back refreshed and better able to tackle challenges at home. I've never been to Lake Placid but it has quite the reputation. Lots of people who like to be seen. So maybe you'll get on the cover of Cosmo or something. OK, you don't want to be on the cover of Cosmo, and I don't want to see you there so we'll forget that idea. Anyway, get a nice tan. What a wonderful idea of your parents. They sure love you lots.

School: I think it's a good idea for you to go to the school.

You can't lose, and you may win big. At worst you just decide not to stick it out. But as I've mentioned to you, I think you need some kind of environment away from the house where you can study and be held to certain goals and disciplines. We all need external constraints in order to help us do what we want to do, and maybe this would be one for you. At least it would take some of the pressure off the home environment, and probably everyone would be less crazy since they'd have other places to expend energy. I think you'll find yourself a lot less stressed. So I'm for it, though you have to remember that I know nothing of the school itself. I

just think the idea is good. I'm sure your folks will sort out the right=

way to go.

This is a time of lots of change at the house, yes?

Chang=

e  
for the good I think, but change is always a little tricky, leaves

everyo=

ne

feeling up in the air, can be scary because the old, however difficult

it=

is, is known, while the new is unknown and therefore attacks the nerves

a=

nd

the stomach. Remember that the Lord has you tight by the hand, and his angels are close around you, and nothing happens that he doesn't know

abo=

ut

and sympathize with (including lovely interludes with delightful cousins like ). He has a wonderful adventure in store for you, , so

hang on tight, or rather rest in His arms, and He'll bring you step by

st=

ep

to very good things. =

A Rome tidbit: This morning I drive with Fr. Dan Jones (on the back of his motorino, no helmet, dipping in and out of traffic. I do

lot=

s

of praying on those things, but they're fun.) We sail out past the huge Vittorio Emmanuele Monument, which is right at the middle of Rome and is

=

a

vast white building with statues all over it that everyone (including myself) thinks is ugly, and has the nickname of "the Wedding Cake"

becaus=

e

it sort of looks like one; out past the Roman forum, zipping by the ruins=

of the Colosseum and out into the suburbs of Rome to the novitiate house

=

of

the Missionaries of Charity (the order of nuns begun by Mother Theresa).

=

There are about 75 of them at the Mass, and they're like a roomful of angels of all different colors. Each is dressed in a white Sari with a blue border, which is a very attractive dress for a nun: it looks comfortable, feminine, simple, modest, lovely. I was touched by their

jo=

y,

their simplicity, their peaceful silence, their obvious holiness. =

Afterwards they gave us a simple breakfast, but they don't eat with us. =

They aren't allowed. They want me to come and teach a course to their novices about salvation history. I think I'll do it. I'd like to get to=

know them better, their life is very hard and very beautiful. They take =  
in  
homeless and help feed the poor in Rome and work in AIDS hospices. Then =  
I  
have to come back to the Casa, not on the motorino (Fr. Dan has other fis=  
h  
to fry) but on the city bus. New experience! Jam, pack, bump, shove, hurry, is this my stop? Oh quick, gotta change buses, now where is that number 64, Scusi signorina, ma dov'è il 64? did I understand anything of her answer? no, I'll just mosey over here, ah there it is, climb on board=

push, shove, bump, squeeze, and rumble back to the Piazza Venezia and the=

Wedding Cake where I hop off and walk the final five minutes to the Casà.=  
=

Whew!

Love you lots and lots            Pray for me, and I will for you. =

Miss you.

Zucchini

Juno e-mail printed Sun, 14 Jan 2001 22:20:26 , page 1

From: michaeljkeating@compuserve.com  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: michaeljkeating@compuserve.com  
To:  
Date: Tue, 13 Jul 1999 14:44:11 -0400  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <199907131444\_MC2-7CD4-88B6@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Read

Almost forgot: Here's my address until the end of July:

Casa Santa Maria  
Via del'Umilta 30  
00187 Roma  
Italia

In August I will be lost in Siena somewhere. Anytime after  
August=  
t  
1st you can send mail to my address for the rest of the year:

North American College  
00120 Vatican City State  
Europe

Peace!

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Tue, 27 Jul 1999 04:26:21 -0400  
Subject: Greetings  
Message-ID: <199907270426\_MC2-7E6A-8396@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Replied

Cara

Hello dear friend. I just got my email back up after a week of serious illness. This is more nerve-racking in Italy, where there are

no  
compuserve reps, and you don't know who to call, and the long-distance calling to the States is expensive and then they put you on hold forever. =

"If you want technical assistance, press 6; If your name begins with Z, press 9; If you'd like to shoot the person who put this message together, =

press the trigger." And then at the end of all that routing and re-routi=

ng  
you get this lovely message: "We're receiving more than our usual number =

of  
calls at the moment. Please hang up and try again some other time." Grr=

r.  
This happened six or seven times before I finally broke the barrier. =

Anyway, here I am.

Confession time: Twice in the last week I have pretended I wasn't=

American. I wasn't even thinking about it, it was an involuntary playful=

response. Both times there were loud Americans who approached me speaki=

g  
slow bad Italian trying to get directions. The first incident involved t=

wo  
girls of about 21 or so, both with about three pounds of make-up on mostl=

y  
around the eyes. I had been quietly looking out over a part of the forum=

,  
and they came up and stood about ten feet away, talking to each other loudly enough to wake up the old Roman dead. So I wasn't inclined to pleasant thoughts. Then they started arguing about the best way to get t=

o  
some place or other, and I could hear them say "Well we need to ask



someone. What about that guy over there. Um, how do you say..." And  
th=  
en  
they walked over. Of course I heard the whole thing and was wincing  
inside, but I was still staring out over the drunken marble pillars  
wrapp=  
ed  
in an austere and ignoring silence. When I responded to them, without  
thinking about it I spoke as if I was English! Which I'm sure they  
found=

picturesque. Then two days later a troop of (again loud, how loud  
Americans are) golden-agers came walking down the quiet street where I  
wa=  
s  
strolling, with maps in hand arguing with one another, and accosted me  
in=

horrible Italian. And I pretended to be an Italian! I said a few words  
=  
in  
English with a thick accent, and a few phrases in Italian, which they  
repeated appreciatively, and then they went off thanking me with  
horrible=

accents. The thing I'm puzzled at is how quickly I responded. It's got  
=  
me  
slightly worried, like maybe I have a deep identity crisis about my true  
nationality. Who knows? Next time I might turn out to be Polish, or  
Bulgarian, or Serbo-Croat! Um yiz, veddy strenchk. But you are a big  
he=  
lp  
if ever I'm tempted to get too irritated with American travelers. You  
ke=  
ep  
me from thinking that Americans are just "like that". It helps in such  
situations to have some real down-home Americans whom you love and  
appreciate dearly. So thanks.

As of Sunday I will be in the lovely town of Siena, which will  
be=  
a  
welcome change from admittedly noisy and touristy (if still enchanting)  
Rome. I'm not bringing my computer, so shoot me something before Sunday  
and tell me how you're doing. Is the New York jaunt still on? Are your  
flowers, any of them, still alive? Are you managing to survive your  
Mom'=  
s  
new job? Are your brothers finding new and yet more imaginative ways to  
prepare surprises for you? =

I'll send you something from Siena if I can figure out the  
Italia=  
n  
postal system. (I've so far been using the Vatican's which is lots  
easier.) Keep chin up, dear Corraggio! Love you lots and lots.

Zucchini =

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Sun, 29 Aug 1999 10:32:37 -0400  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <199908291032\_MC2-82C7-2B8B@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Replied

This is a reply to your email of August 7, so you probably don't remember what you wrote me. That was way back before your trip to New York. Details? Djalikit? Get mugged? Asked to be in a movie? Caught in the middle of a drug shootout? Or was it kind of boring.

I hadn't realized you'd be going to public school. Have I got it right? I'm sure you'll do great, even if the boys don't distract you.

don't expect most of them will, you being too level-headed and having a good bit of boy right at home to keep you busy. But it only takes one

two nice ones after all... =

Siena was really cool, pretty place and fun to walk around in.

even learned a little Italian, though not much. It comes slowly.

By the way, rule number one for writing to me: you're not allowed to say you're sorry for not having written since God knows when. Write me when you write me and it will be fine, and I won't be sitting around thinking you're a lousy correspondent. =

Address and phone number here at the Great North American College=

Pontifical North American College  
00120 Vatican City State =

Europe

011-39-06-6849-3218

Lots of love dear . Thinking about you and praying for you.=

For patience and love, and all good things. Tell me something about New York.

Mr. Dr. Z. Keating

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Sun, 12 Sep 1999 12:08:40 -0400  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <199909121208\_MC2-847B-3F73@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Read

Cara

Great to get news from you of your visit to New York. I suppose  
=  
by  
now it seems like a dream to you as other things come to dominate your  
days. Sounds as though your cousins (?) took great care of you. Hope  
yo=  
u  
get back soon. My grandparents came through Ellis Island. They wanted  
t=  
o  
change my grandfather's name from Jacobacci to Jones, but he wouldn't  
let=

them. Way to go Poppa. I'm not sure I'd want to live in New York, but  
it's a cool place to spend some time. =

But here's a semi-serious thought for you to ponder: that our  
rea=  
I  
happiness comes in being content exactly where our Father in heaven has  
p=  
ut  
is, in the knowledge that somehow or other it's for our good, and that  
He=  
's  
up to something even if we can't see it. So your visit to New York was  
a=

beautiful gift from Him and He wanted you to be there. And now day by  
da=  
y  
He wants you to be where you are, and the way you'll find Him and see  
Him=

is by grabbing hold of the reality of your moment and not wishing you  
wer=  
e  
somewhere else. Whew, this is sounding pretty religious. But you see  
wh=  
at  
I mean. You've got such a vivid imagination, sweet ; and such  
desir=  
es  
for a beautiful and interesting life, that one of your temptations will  
b=  
e  
to grow dissatisfied with your life as it is. And that's no good way to  
stay happy.

School. Glad you're finding it at least liveable. Let me know more as time goes on how things take you there. My guess is you'll do great, but it may take a little while to feel yourself at home.

Around here things are good. We just returned from a weekend in Assisi, home of St. Francis and St. Claire. It was a nice visit, relaxing, inspiring, Assisi is a beautiful little city built on the side of a hill,

and almost every house has a beautiful view of the plain below that stretches out to the distant range of hills. Everything is in stone, and

they hang little flower pots on the walls in black iron pot holders; really charming, with crooked stone staircases going up and down the mountain between houses, and drunken arches and tunnels under which you walk. We had a mass at the tomb of St. Francis, and our prayer times were in a little chapel that was about 900 years old. Not bad. =

I had a touch of the old tropical sprue yesterday. Thought it was gone, and there it was again. It makes me grateful that at least it's mostly gone. I had forgotten how washed out it makes me feel. Today I'm

better again, so just a short attack.

Today we had a sports day, and I held up the honor of Minnesota both the baseball diamond and the football field. I keep surprising guys. I'm almost twice as old as some of them, and they don't expect me to be able to do anything except limp around with a cane, and then I surprise em. Lots of fun. =

I finished with my official Italian classes. Now I'm on my own.

I'm doing pretty well; I can understand most of what is said, and I can say what I need to say, though with lots of mistakes. It's a really nice language when you get the rhythm of it. =

Love you lots and lots. Missing you here. You're in my prayers. Greetings to those loveable brothers of yours. To I send

=

no

greeting at all. She has refused to return my letters and I'm not on speaking terms with her.

Mr. Keating

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Thu, 23 Sep 1999 12:06:00 -0400  
Subject: Skool is kool  
Message-ID: <199909231206\_MC2-8610-D4A1@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Replied

Dear sweetheart

I just got back from a long retreat. It was a good one. For  
four  
days we didn't speak. Maybe you should see if your family could do a  
silent four-day retreat. I bet it would last about 29 seconds.

We stayed at a retreat center at a place called Castel Gondolfo,  
which is a little town high above a lake, where the Pope has his summer  
residence. During the late summer he comes there and has a more relaxed  
schedule and hangs out in the cafes and stuff. OK so he doesn't hang  
out=

in cafes. It's a lovely spot, and the Pope was there though we didn't  
see  
him. But it was good to look across the lake, which is like a lagoon  
circled by high hills, and from our high hill to see on the other side  
the  
sun glinting on the palazzo where the Pope was staying, and to know that  
he  
was there, and to say a prayer for him. =

I'm now done with my Italian classes, and pretty soon I'll be  
starting school as well, in Italian. So we're together this fall in  
starting new schools. Sorry to hear you aren't finding more kids to  
become  
my  
friends with. Sounds as though you're keeping a good attitude, way to  
go=  
,  
but that doesn't make it easier. As for kids liking you, it's too early  
to  
say. You only ask that question after a year or so, because sometimes  
people start out not liking someone for who knows what silly reason and  
then find out later that there's a lot to like in them. I'm not  
surprised  
that you find the kids immature. You've got the jump on most of them,  
partly because it's the way you are, and partly thanks to your parents,  
who  
have created a home for you that leads you into greater maturity. Lots  
of  
kids don't have that advantage, as you've noticed. If you're getting

raised by the TV set, you aren't likely to develop much maturity.  
Anyway=

whatever happens, if you go through this time with the Lord, you'll find  
that you're learning a lot and growing, even if it comes in ways you  
wouldn't have specially wanted or chosen. Funny how the things we learn  
most from and that change us most are often exactly the things we  
haven't=

chosen or didn't want. If it's any comfort to you, you're getting lots

o=

f

"like" waves from over the ocean. I like you enough to make up for at  
least, say, ten or twenty kids who don't, with some left over. Or

thirt=

y,

or forty... =

Your comment about sometimes seeing my car in your drive and  
thinking it was me is reassuring. The car is still there. (Not that I  
worry.) =

Are your brothers handling school OK? Not getting into fights? =  
making friends?

Love you lots and lots, : . Remember that Jesus is right  
next=

to you, inside of you, looking out for you and finding ways to take care

=

of

you. He won't let anything come your way that you can't handle with  
him.=

=

I'll be praying for you specially this evening. Miss you.

Dr. Zuke



From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Sat, 2 Oct 1999 07:10:31 -0400  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <199910020710\_MC2-8764-D3A3@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Replied

Dear sweetheart

Sounds as though you're quite the wildcat at school. It's funny isn't it? how your brothers can drive you absolutely batty at home, but I=et someone try to attack them, and you realize how much you love them and want to protect them. I used to fight a lot when I was a kid with my younger brother Dan, and I remember one time we had a fight on the way home from school and we were mad at each other, and then this other guy started chasing Dan, saying that Dan had thrown an acorn at him and hit him (probably true) and I immediately turned on the guy and told him to get lost and leave my brother alone, and I remember that Dan also knew I would do that and somehow was looking for protection from me, even though I was=

ready to crush his ribs about half an hour earlier. That's the way family works. And you're a brave girl, despite your occasional experience of nerviness. Way to go.

Are you finding the stuff you're studying in school to be about your level? Too hard? Too easy? Yes, send me your essay, and whatever else you wish whenever. I'd be delighted to look over what you've written and give you my thoughts. One thing is sure: You have an excellent ability to write, in that your personality comes through clearly and forcefully, and you communicate well. This is not a common ability. =

Whatever fine points you may need to learn concerning grammar or spelling=

or technique, you should be confident that you have all the right instincts for becoming a good writer. I say nothing at this point about becoming a=

good mathematician. Although miracles do happen. (Joke.)

Life here is going fine, except that my Sunday evening have lost all their sparkle, and I miss you guys a lot. But that's OK, since this too is a way for me to grow in love for the Lord. We have the "Spaghetti=

Bowl" coming up. First year guys (including me) against the rest of the college. They want me to play back-up quarterback and wide receiver.

Bu=

t

it's a bone cruncher of a game, and I told them I'm too old for that

stuf=

f.

I'll just eat the spaghetti afterwards.

It's just time for pranzo, which is the Italian name for the mid-day meal. They have a big one here every day, with pasta and then a main course afterwards, white wine, salad, and dessert. Too much for lunch, I can see why they all take siestas afterwards. The big question:=

=

Who will I sit with today? The tables hold six, and you just go and get

=

a

place, so you never know. I might be next to tall Tad, six foot six,

who=

looks and acts kind of like Learch, the cadaver in the Addams family.

Or=

maybe it will be Tait, who I am sure came out of a movie about early

19th=

century romantic Germany, blond-haired, chubby, a little prim and

proper.=

=

Or maybe Yung, a vietnamese fellow who moves his head constantly when he talks and always ends his sentences looking the other way so you can't

he=

ar

him, and then you say "What?" and he laughs and says nothing, so it's

tou=

gh

to carry on a conversation. But I think it will probably be my luck to

g=

et

this guy whose name I think is Steve but no one calls him that, they

just=

use his last name, Bukkis, a big glowering guy with slanting eyes like a Mongolian and a look that says, talk to me and I put a knife in you. He communicates mainly in grunts. I think he's going to be a great priest.

=

So off I go.

Love you Even better, Jesus does. He knows how lovely

an=

d

good you are, and understands every thought and every pain and every

fear=

,

and he's with you every moment, right now, bringing you his peace and

lov=

e  
and joy of heart. Thanks for the news, it's delightful to hear about  
you=

and the family. Keep praying for me, I need it.

Mr. Keating

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: ~~Fri, 22 Oct 1999~~ 12:07:58 -0400  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <199910221208\_MC2-8A0E-92E8@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Replied

Dear

Thanks for your email to me. Always good to hear how things are going. I know what you mean, that it's harder to write, because the pers= on you're writing to isn't there, and you're tired, and the time you really want to write you can't, and the times you can you really don't want to. =

Sorry to hear things are tough with the piano. And piano teacher=

Sounds as though it's been a frustrating time. Same with school and with=

your brothers. Listen, though. I don't think the answer is "buckle down=

and try harder." Sometimes that's the right answer, but I don't think it= 's your right answer. That's the answer for people who are fundamentally lazy, and who are lolling on the couch eating chocolates when they should=

be up and helping out or doing their homework or whatever. Not you. =

Here's the advice I would give you, though I'm not sure I can express it = in a way that makes sense, so you'll have to tell me if it does. =

I think part of what you face is this: that you have very high standards for yourself, and when you don't meet them you feel crummy, and=

so you try harder, but it doesn't really help and you get even more frustrated; there you go again yelling at your brothers, there you go aga= in letting your mind wander and not getting to the piano, there you go again=

saying or thinking something nasty when you want to be nice, and the resu= It

is utter exhaustion. And so you think, alright, I'm really going to try this time, and I'm really going to be different, but it's still you, same=

old , and a sadness begins to creep into your heart because you wond=  
er  
if you'll ever change. You have a hunger for a higher life, for being good, and educated, and kind, and accomplished, but your desire for a nob=  
le  
life (which is wonderful to have) isn't matched by your ability to get there. And this leads to anger and depression and feeling bad about yourself and irritability and kicking No, you wouldn't kick  
=

Kicking ? =

Here's the thing: the desire you have for a beautiful and noble life have been given you by God and is a treasure. This is what leads yo=  
u  
to find the lives of the kids at school so unattractive, and what makes y=  
ou  
run towards Jane Austen and art museums and things Italian. But you can'=  
t  
get where you want to go just by trying. You can't become a better perso=  
n  
just by gritting your teeth and making a resolution and going for it. It=

doesn't work. Not for you, or for me, or for anybody. We've got this hu=  
ge  
problem right smack in the middle of us called sin, and despite our best intentions we can't do what we want, and we fail again and again. There'=  
s

only one remedy for this, and that's Jesus. So you're in the process of learning something very important: that all your efforts to be a really good person are not going to make you one, no matter how hard you try.

So here's my practical advice for you:

First: Take a good long look at yourself with Jesus (know what I mean? Have a conversation with him about it) as you really are, and say clearly to yourself: OK, here's me, the good, the bad, the pretty, the ugly, the stuff that does and doesn't go well, the sleepless nights, the desires, fears hopes, sins, the whole thing. And then say to Jesus: =

There's nothing much I can do to change any of this. Any changing around=

here is going to have to be done by you. And then throw yourself into hi=  
s

arms and let him simply love you and begin to change in you what you  
can't  
change in yourself. And here's the amazing thing: he loves us tenderly  
and  
completely, not because we're so good, but even though we're not, and he  
wants to change us into being more and more good and beautiful and holy  
and  
happy. It's his work, though, not ours. =

So next time you get frustrated with yourself, or find yourself  
doing the same old thing, don't say to yourself "Now I have to try  
harder."  
Instead go right to Jesus and give yourself again to him and say, Here I  
am, Change my heart, Make me the way you want me to be. The important  
thing is to stay close to Jesus and never let yourself forget his love  
for  
you and his readiness to do anything for you. =

This may not sound very practical, I know. But it's really the  
most practical thing we need to learn about how to get through a day and  
a  
life in peace and joy. You've been captured by Christ, and he'll make  
you  
perfect, he really will, if you let him. But that's his business. Your  
business is to stay close to him. When you are happy, share your  
happiness  
with him. When you're sad or depressed, sit with him in sadness. When  
you're afraid, let him in on your fears. When you're lonely and missing  
friends, open your heart to him about it and let him share your  
loneliness. When you do something you know is wrong, don't run from  
him, =

but run to him, and tell him, and ask him to heal you. And when you  
find  
that instinct rising up in you, to tighten up and try harder and harder,  
say NO to it, and go right to Jesus. St. Paul put it this way: "The  
life  
I live is no longer my own. Now it is Christ who lives in me." Christ  
himself is living in you, and will change you so you will really be able  
to  
do all the things you so want to do, and to be the woman you desire to  
be =

OK. Enough for one letter! Love you lots and lots and lots  
dear  
r

No matter what anyone at school may say, you're an absolute sweetheart. Keep hope high, and stay close to Jesus. =

And bug your uncle for a few items I sent back from Rome  
for=

you guys.

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Mon, 15 Nov 1999 15:24:20 -0500  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <199911151525\_MC2-8D34-21DA@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Replied

Great as always to hear from you. I'm glad you liked your  
stuff.=  
=

The painting of the Blessed Virgin is by Fra Filippo Lippi, one of the  
mo=  
st  
famous of the renaissance painters and one of my favorites. This is one  
=  
of  
the most lovely depictions of Mary that I know, so I wanted it to grace  
t=  
he  
room . Hope you got a t-shirt you liked. =

I'm really glad you're going to the high school. A bigger pond  
leaves more room to breathe, and more chances at finding friends.  
Really=

really cool that you've already made some friends in so short a time.  
B=  
ut  
now what in God's green earth is Flori Culture? And how did this guy  
get=  
a  
name like Jacupszchwkytz? I mean, Flori Culture? Do they teach you  
how=

to weave vines? arrange flowers? spot matching floral prints for  
interi=  
or  
decoration? What are they teaching you in high school? I thought you  
we=  
re  
supposed to learn stuff like how to read and write and do math. Shows  
ho=  
w  
fundamentally old-fashioned I am. In any case, I have no worries for  
you=

whether in writing or in Flori-Culture. You'll do great at school, both  
=  
in  
academics and socially. Even if there's always a period of time for  
adjustment when the stomach just doesn't want to settle. I remember my  
first year of high school: it took me about three months to really feel  
a=  
t



home and stop being nervous, even though I liked it OK from the beginning=  
=

It's just the newness of everything.

I knew your piano lesson would go better after you slipped that narcotic in your teacher's water. Keep it up, but not every time. You don't want to make her into an addict! (Or was it that you just practice=  
d  
hard?)

As you can see, I'm fine, no earthquake anywhere close by, at  
lea=  
st  
not to feel. Building still standing, Rome traffic still crazy and chaotic, the Tiber river still meandering its muddy way. This weekend  
th=  
e  
New Men (first year guys) have to put on a talent show for the rest of  
th=  
e  
house. They've got a whole bunch of skits together, and I'm not doing much. I have a little music to perform in the background, but I'm out  
of=

the limelight. I'm kind of keeping quiet about this performance stuff, because I really don't have much time for it. (I'm also walking around with dark shades and a false nose. Undercover, ya know?) =

I've got some good new pasta recipes to cook for you guys  
sometim=  
e.  
Here's one of my favorites: tortellini with peanut butter sauce  
covered=

with a cool whip/anchovy topping. Mmmm. Mouth waters just thinking  
abou=  
t  
it.

Love you lots and lots dear . . . Keep chin up high and  
remembe=  
r  
how deeply lovable and loved you are. Jesus is always close by, right  
at=

your side. A kiss and a hug.

Mr. Keating =

=

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Wed, 17 Nov 1999 15:00:42 -0500  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <199911171502\_MC2-8D90-95EA@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Replied

Your Italian lesson: =

brother =3D fratello  
sister =3D sorella  
friend =3D amico (or amica if it's a girl)  
music =3D musica  
good night =3D buona notte

A few extras to keep in mind:

spaghetti =3D spaghetti  
ravioli =3D ravioli  
refrigerator =3D frigorifero =

Thanks for the tip on Florid Culture. Sounds good, unlike  
Horrid=

Culture which I seem to remember was a class I once took. Thanksgiving  
sounds like it will be a real bash for you guys. Do you help cook? The  
really hard part is getting the cranberry sauce out of the cans and into  
dishes. Takes a lot of practice. Say hi to for me.

Poor: . I'm afraid you're going to have to get used to  
being=

hounded by boys. You're too pretty and charming not to be, and you'll  
on=

ly  
get prettier and charmier as the years go by. (Charmier?) Still you  
mus=

t  
admit it's at least vaguely flattering, no? I have to agree with you  
tha=

t  
dating in high school is pretty stupid, especially at age 14, and also  
later. Problem is it's totally artificial. It's like playing at life,  
because there's nothing really to do except hang around and get mad at  
ea=

ch  
other and kiss and make up and get mad and call and make up and get  
mad..=

. =

Pretty boring. If you were a Roman girl during the days of the Empire,  
you'd be getting ready for marriage now. They used to marry around 13  
or=

14. Yikes! say you, that's way too early. True and not true. True for  
=  
us  
these days because we have lots to do before being ready to marry, but  
in=

some ways it's more natural that way. It's plunging into real life and  
n=  
ot  
this silly make-believe stuff that goes on in high school. St. Cecilia,  
who is buried here in Rome, was a high-society Roman girl who was  
martyre=  
d  
for her faith. She was sixteen. And already married. Point is, why  
pretend and get all tangled up for no good reason when you'll be happier  
and more peaceful without the hassle, and then you can find a guy when  
you're getting ready to do something real about it if you decide you  
want=

to. Of course, 14 year-old boys are an attractive lot, aren't they?  
It'=  
s  
about the very worst time for boys, they do get better thank God. =

A quick word about : I can understand your missing her and  
thinking about her. Whatever else she was, she seemed to be an  
interesti=  
ng  
person in her own way, and she wanted to be your friend. I can't help  
thinking though that you did well to let things lie. Choosing friends  
is=

one of life's most important businesses, because once you choose them  
the=  
y  
start to change you whether you want them to or not, so you have to  
decid=  
e  
if you want to be changed in that direction. So you might ask: is  
the kind of friend who is going to lead me to be a better person, who  
refreshes me (on the whole) rather than brings me down, who I would like  
=  
to  
have in my life and have my children get to know and introduce to my  
husband and other friends? Obviously these things don't exactly apply  
to=

you, but it's a way of thinking about them to help clarify your mind.  
On=

the other side there's the question of whether you know there's  
something=

good you could do for her that would be worth the risk. I'll say a  
praye=  
r  
for you and for also.

Hokay. Nuff for now. All my love and even a little bit more. =

You're great      Give      a kiss for me and tell her I said hi.

Dr. Zuke      =

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Tue, 21 Dec 1999 10:54:32 -0500  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <199912211054\_MC2-91F5-D0E9@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Replied

Dear sweetheart

I've been listening to Handel's Messiah as well. Great stuff, isn't it?

Today it has been bright and sunny but cold. I've been reminded  
=  
of  
Minnesota. A welcome break: we've had lots of rain around here, and I  
do=  
a  
lot of walking, and I lost my umbrella a couple of weeks ago. I've been  
caught in two downpours and have been absolutely drenched. I bought  
another umbrella. Smart. =

Last week they turned on the new lights at St. Peter's. They've  
recently restored the whole facade, and now with the lights it looks as  
Michelangelo never dreamed it might. Really lovely. I can see it from  
m=  
y  
window through the trees if I stick my head out.

One more day of school and then we have Christmas vacation. I'm  
going to England to spend a week with my brother Dan. We have a nice  
tim=  
e  
planned: a few days in Oxford, a few in London, and a few in the  
countryside of Devon. Devon is famous for its high teas. I'll be sure  
=  
to  
think of you while drinking a nice tea with perhaps a crumpet or two and  
=  
a  
scone covered in cream.

Poor , your description of your experience of high school:  
n=  
ot  
so nice. I wish I could be there and think of something to cheer you  
up.=  
=  
=

Like dance on one leg with a red hat on. No, I guess that wouldn't be  
ve=  
ry  
cheering. Probably depress you even more. But you have my sympathy. I  
think the first two years of high school were among my toughest of any  
time. It's a difficult time for everyone, and nobody except the most  
superficial people actually enjoy themselves. But the hard part is how  
cruel people can be, for no good reason except they don't happen to like

the way you look, or walk, or something. You'll get through it OK, I  
hav=

e  
no fears for you, and I'm sure it will get better than it now is, though  
=

I  
wouldn't want to promise that at it's best high school is very good.  
The=

thing to remember is that it isn't you that's strange, but it's the  
environment that's weird. I know this can be really hard to remember  
whe=

n  
it seems as though you're the one out of step. But your high school is  
a=

very small world, and it isn't giving you an accurate picture of  
yourself=

. =  
So you have to do your best to get through it well, but the important  
thi=  
ng  
is to remember who you really are. =

Here's who you really are: you are a lovely and wonderful girl,  
with lots of different talents, and lots of interesting things to say  
and=

to think and feel, and you're great company, and you're a cool and  
delightful friend and very lovable. And you've got really wonderful  
thin=

gs  
ahead of you, kept secret for you by your Father in heaven, who sits up  
at=

night and thinks how beautiful you are and how he can delight you. (I'm  
not making this up, it's true.) So keep chin up, and don't forget who  
yo=

u  
really are. And when you get lonely and feel bad, it helps to remember  
that you're not suffering alone, but Jesus is with you and sympathizing  
with your loneliness. This doesn't just take the pain away, but it  
makes=

it lots easier to bear. And he'll find a way to turn even your  
lonelines=  
s  
into something that will help you somehow, even if you can't see it now.  
=  
=

So what are you getting for Christmas? Socks? Pajamas with  
feet=

in them? Puppies?

Merry Christmas, sweet

Here's hoping for every good

thing=

for you. Love you lots and lots.

Mr. Keating

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Sat, 8 Jan 2000 06:49:05 -0500  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <200001080649\_MC2-93D9-3002@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Replied

I just returned from England, and what a feast! Three emails  
fro=  
m  
sweet Almost overwhelming.

We spent the turn of the millenium with about 3 million people  
on=

the Thames close to the Parliament buildings in London. And after all,  
i=  
t  
was hugely anticlimactic. Pretty much nothing happened. Which is good  
news on the whole, but after all the hype, one wanted something a little  
more dramatic.

England was good. They sort of speak English there, which was a  
welcome break from here, where I sort of speak Italian. And I love  
English-style Gothic, especially for churches, so I sat in a few of  
those=

for long periods. We also did a cliff walk along the south coast of  
London, and the sea is something to see (so to speak) wherever you touch  
it. Also some good high teas and pints in pubs. Altogether a good  
break=

from school. Now back at it.

Speaking of which, hang in there and don't get too discouraged. =

Keep remembering this phrase: "High school is not real life, high  
school=

is not real life..." You can walk the halls muttering this under your  
breath, which will really get other kids wondering about you. I really  
d=

o  
sympathize with you. I was in a good high school, and there were lots  
of=

nice kids there, and on the whole I didn't like it at all. I think it  
ha=

s  
more to do with a tricky time of life, no longer kids, not yet adults,  
difficult for everyone.

But about Flora Culture: It seems to me that this will be of  
immense use to you in later life. Why, I can think of oh so many times  
when I wish I knew more about the culture of floras, like for instance,  
u=



m,  
well I'm sure there must have been some time or other, 'ah, and how's the weather? Snowing?

Speaking of snow, I haven't seen a flake this year, and probably won't, and I think that's a pity. I like snow. In moderation. On the other hand, we were playing basketball outdoors yesterday and the temperature was just right for it, so I'm not complaining.

You had me laughing about                      She's quite a character. =

She wasn't saying much when I was there, but somehow she was communicatin=

g  
anyway, and often making me laugh. Glad to know she misses me along wit=  
h  
the Pope. Two people she knows well and have meant a lot to her.

But now remember                      , don't beat yourself up. There will be lo=

ts  
of other people to do that for you. It's part of your sensitive nature that you are very quick to feel guilty about things, and you're going to have to stay strong in mind to keep those feelings from making you miserable. My guess is that when there's strain between you and your mom=

,  
it's not because you're being bad. Once in a while, sure, and once in a while your mom will be just having a bad day, but most often it's probabl=

y  
not either of your fault, it's something that has more to do with finding=

a  
way to get your lives working together well. What I mean is, your mom loves you and wants things to go well for you, and you love your mom and want things to go well for her. That's the bottom line. If things aren'=

t  
good between you at a given moment, it isn't because you don't love each other, or because you're trying to figure out ways to drive each other crazy. It might be personality differences, or circumstances in your day=

or hers, or how the rhythm of your days are fitting together, or some suc=

h  
thing. Point is, you shouldn't feel guilty about it. If you're being a little snot on purpose, then OK, feel bad and say you're sorry. But I doubt you do that much. This doesn't mean you should just ignore what problems come up. Try to tackle them with as much grace and good sense a=

s  
you have. But don't feel bad about it. Be ready to shrug your shoulders=

and say, "Sometimes that's the way things go," and forget quickly.

And remember (I hope you don't get bored by me telling you this

a=

ll

the time) how much you are loved by Christ. He's quite passionate about you, he loves you and desires you with a special love made for you alone,=

that fits exactly who you are, and he's the one to go to when you feel crummy about life, yourself, school, relationships, whatever. =

Love you lots and lots            Hoping and praying that this new year will be full of wonderful things for you. I'm thinking it will. =

Your favorite Roman Doctor.        =

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To: >  
Date: Mon, 14 Feb 2000 09:23:40 -0500  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <200002140924\_MC2-990F-717D@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Replied

Dear sweet

What a pleasure to speak with you on the phone. You're always a joy. Sorry to hear things are rough. And it's February besides, which is the heart of winter and a cold time. But as one Jewish mother used to say, Don't complain, things could be worse, you could have two broken legs besides. Somehow I never understood why this was supposed to be comforting. =

On Saturday we finished our exams for the first semester. Today I began classes again. Big break, not even a full weekend. I took a nap. =

I'm excited about this new semester, I bought a big thing of Elmer's glue =

and I have a 64 box of Crayola crayons so I'm ready for anything.

Don't let school get you down. Or rather, don't let it tell you who you are, which is the tough part to deal with. It's hard if your science teacher thinks you're a retard, but it's much worse if you think you're one yourself. In case this is not clear, repeat five times slowly =

I am not a retard. I'm joking, but it's no joke really, because it's the =

thing that's most difficult to endure. So remember that you are a splendid =  
id

and sweet and talented girl who just happens not to be very good at math and has some catching up to do. Failure ought not to be part of your vocabulary. Forget what the word means, because it doesn't apply to you. =  
=

In case you're wondering, I'm not worried about you. I know you'll get through this stuff and do fine, though I feel for you because it isn't easy. I'll be saying some extra prayers for you, for lots of joy in your =

heart and inner strength to handle everything at home and a twinkle in your =  
ur

eye so you can laugh rather than cry when things get rough. Remember  
who=

you are : you're a dream in your heavenly Father's mind, and he  
love=

s  
you and desires you and longs for you to be so happy you'll burst. The  
w=

ay  
there is sometimes hard, but he's close by, and his Holy Spirit is  
inside=

of you to give you help and strength. So run to him when you need help,  
and he'll always be there for you. =

(And no strangling or poisoning of younger brothers or sisters. =

It's a nice easy solution and it would probably be pleasant for a short  
while, but it brings certain other problems.) =

I'm going now to teach a class to some Missionaries of Charity. =

We've been doing Adam and Eve. Lots of fun.

Love you lots . Wishing you peace and joy. =

A big hug,

Dr. Zuke =

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Thu, 20 Apr 2000 04:19:50 -0400  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <200004200420\_MC2-A1E8-BF8F@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Replied

Sweet

Today is Holy Thursday and we enter the big three-day celebration=

of Easter starting this evening. This year we do everything here in the College, all the Masses and services. Then next year they let us go for Holy Week and we can join something somewhere else. I like these services=

especially the candlelight vigil on Saturday night. Christ remaking the whole world, breaking into our darkness and setting all on fire with his love and his light. A great image and great things to remember.

Spring is pretty much here in Rome, and making its way to summer too quickly. Like Minnesota, Rome doesn't really have much spring. =

England is the place for real spring. Here you get a couple of weeks and=

then whoosh! you're into hot weather and summer sun. Which is also good,=

but I do enjoy the slow budding of the trees, then watching them put forth=

h  
their light green shoots, and seeing small flowers sprout from the barren=

earth, and then hear different birds singing and smell the ground as it sends out its spring scents. You would like the parks here in Rome. The=

city itself you would probably like in parts, but it's too noisy and dirt=

y  
to feel really comfortable in. But the parks are beautiful, Rome at its best, and this is the time of year to visit them. I like to go early in the morning before the Romans are up and about. Then the quiet of the ne=

w  
day is especially peaceful, and everything is fresh and clean.

The day after Easter a few of us are renting a car and driving north to the region of Piedmont. We're staying in a bed and breakfast there: this is not a touring vacation, just a chance to get away from school for a few days and to rest and look at pretty scenery. And Piedmo=

nt  
is the place for that. It's wine-growing country, so they have lots of rolling hills with vines and small villages. And it's right up against

t=  
he  
Alps, so you can drive an hour north and hit the big mountains. There  
ar=  
e  
also pretty lakes, the most famous being Lago Maggiore, an old vacation  
spot for the ancient Romans. I'm looking forward to it as simply a  
rest.=

=  
What with busy Rome, and classes every day (you know how that is) and  
living in the College here (with 200 other guys, a lot to keep track  
of),=

I  
am looking for a little peace and simplicity. A Monday to Friday kind  
of=

deal.

Thanks for giving me news of how life is going. I wanted to say  
"povera te" which the Italians often say, meaning, "poor you." A way of  
expressing sympathy. Sounds as though life has been really difficult  
lately. But first let's look for the silver lining. Things to be  
thankf=

ul  
for. Let's see... teeth getting straighter? (pay no attention to those  
pounding headaches and sliced up inner lips)... new puppy to enjoy?  
(eve=

n  
if little gifts are left around for someone to clean up)... um, oh,  
here'=  
s

one: have you been suffering at all from potato famine lately? You  
haven't? Hah. There's something really to be grateful for. See, life  
ain't so bad. =

But I'm not really treating this as a joke. I can just imagine  
your anguish, and I really feel for you. You can be sure that I'll be  
bringing you to the Lord especially in prayer during these days (always  
d=

o,  
but now specially). And I wouldn't laugh about this with you if I  
didn't=

know that you're courageous at heart and that with Christ to help you  
you'll do fine and get through all this stuff. (And also that you keep  
a=

twinkle in your eye even when you're crying, which is a sure sign that  
there's at least a touch of the Irish in you somewhere.)  
=

A few thoughts for you:  
You're simply in a tough spot at home right now. It's never  
easy=

to be around conflict, there's no good way to handle it. I mean there's  
=  
no  
way to get through it that makes you feel good. You just feel yucky no

matter what you do. If you talk about it you feel yucchy. If you don't talk about it you feel yucchy. If you get mad you feel yucchy. If you don't get mad you feel yucchy. OK, enough of this yucchy stuff, it's not=

even a real word. So give the yucch to Jesus, and don't be hard on yourself. There's a temptation at times like this to think nasty things about yourself, to feel that you could be handling this much better, to feel vaguely guilty all the time as if somehow the nastiness was your fault, even if you can't think what you might have done wrong. So you ju= st walk around feeling like a dirty rag. That's a temptation to resist with=

all the strength of your mind. It can spill over into other things too, = so that you just feel like you're failing at life somehow, nothing is really=

going the way it should, and if you only tried harder or were a better person or could move to Zimbabwe it would all be better. (Well, maybe Zimbabwe is not the best example. Paraguay?) Don't believe it. =

Here are a few things that are true: You are a dear sweet person=

and a really cool kid besides. (I could expand on this for a long time, but I don't want to flatter you, it's not good for your complexion.) You=

are a dream daughter, an absolute gem, and your parents think this about you, I've heard them say it many times to me and to others. They're very=

proud of you, and love you like crazy and think the world of you. What your folks most need from you now is your patience and loving forgiveness=

, just as they've been patient and forgiving with you over the years in way=

s that you didn't realize but now that you're older and understand what it takes to raise kids you know better. It's tough for them to express to

y= ou what they really think of you when they're angry, you know how that can b=

e. So stay calm, and keep them in your prayers, and keep eyes on God who is=

right beside you, inside of you, holding you close and giving you strengt= h and encouragement for whatever situations you are facing.

I can understand your wanting to talk about what's bugging you,

it's natural and you need a place to do it. I can also understand your Mom's concern, no one wants to feel that the world is looking at their private struggles, whether big or small. But you need to be able to feel=

comfortable letting off steam and getting perspective, and if your Uncle isn't the one to talk to it's fine if you talk with someone else, provided you know the person to be someone who can keep a secret and not =

go  
blabbing. It may be that isn't the one, sweet girl though she is, because she may get too bent out of shape by your troubles, and you need someone who can both understand and give you some balance. If you feel comfortable with , fine, talk with her. And in a pinch there's me, though I'm a little far; but you can always call, and I'll call back so

y=  
ou  
don't have to worry about phone charges. Don't feel bad about having talked to though. You weren't trying to hurt anyone, you were just=

trying to keep yourself sane, it wasn't wrong. You just might want to think twice before doing it again. One of those "learning experiences."

About piano: you should feel free here to do what you most want.  
=

If you most want to be a really fantastic pianist and perhaps make a care=

er  
of it, then the thing to do is to make decisions now that will help you  
g=

et  
there. If you'd like to play the piano well, but you aren't thinking  
abo=

ut  
it as your life's goal or something you will need for later work, then there is no sense in killing yourself over it. There is no "should" here=

,  
like you "should" play the piano at a certain level and if you don't  
you'=

ve  
failed. It's all a question of what you most want to do. No one will think any less of you, certainly not me, for not choosing music as your primary goal. The only thing to be wary of is of getting irritated at  
th=

e  
present moment by the difficulty of practicing and dealing with an unpleasant teacher and then ditching it all when in your heart you really=

want to continue on. It's the "really want" that's important. So you might ask: Do I really want to make piano and music my main deal? Is thi=

s  
my deepest desire when I think about piano, and practicing, and music?  
O=

r  
do I feel instead as though I'm playing someone else's game here, and



tha=

t

I'm being expected to desire this and go for it at a level that doesn't have an answering ring in my heart? If it's the first, then stick with

i=

t

even if it's hard, and you won't regret it later. If it's the second,

th=

en

ditch it like a hot potato and don't waste time and anguish. If you're

n=

ot

sure, then sit with it for a while and allow yourself to get clarity

abou=

t

it, and then make your decisions. All a question of what you,

, most desire. No question here of right or wrong.

[By the way, for a conversation later sometime: I think your

"mai=

n

deal" in life is going to be loving people. Your greatest gift is your

b=

ig

heart, which is what gives sparkle to your other talents. Protecting

tha=

t

heart of yours is lots more important than whatever you may decide to

"do=

"

by way of career or study.] =

OK, my almost fifteen year old young and pretty friend. Easter

i=

s

almost upon us, Christ has banished darkness and floods the world, every sorrow has been taken up on that cross and been put to death, and new

lif=

e

springs forth all around us. May your heart be filled with the joy of

hi=

s

resurrection, even in the midst of momentary tears.

I was going to call you on your birthday, but I'll be on the

road=

. =

Will you be at home Easter Sunday afternoon, or will you guys be celebrating somewhere else? Let me know and I'll try to give you a birthday call a little early.

Con molto affetto,

Mr. Keating

p.s. Alaska? Cool. Cold even. Watch out for Bigfoot.

pps Which Dan were you talking about? =

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Tue, 9 May 2000 15:17:45 -0400  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <200005091518\_MC2-A461-2C87@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Replied

Here's my explanation for those wonderful descriptions you're getting at school:

Lesbian: this is because you aren't stupidly boy-crazy and don't drool every time you see a picture of Leonardo di Caprio. Makes people suspicious.

English exchange student: you've got a touch of class and style.=

Bitch: you aren't smarmy and you don't kiss peoples' backsides  
ju=  
st  
so they'll say they're your friend.

Prep: you have good taste in clothing.

Artist: you have that air of understanding things beyond them.

New Yorker: this is mysterious to me. Been tawkin funny lately?

Compliments, all of them, though maybe not meant that way. You ain't no weirdo though. Some weird people can be very nice and charming and funny, and I have a soft spot in my heart for a certain kind of weirdness, so if you were weird, I wouldn't much mind, but the thing is, you're not. To find yourself not fitting easily into the typical high school mould is not a sign of weirdness, but a sign of normality.  
Normal=

people would go crazy in high school. You just don't seem to have the capacity that lots of others have to be really weird during a few teenage=

years of life. It's quite common, and lots of these people will look  
bac=  
k  
and wonder about themselves later. You just get stuck wondering about  
th=  
em  
now. =

The challenge of course is to love them even in the midst of the silliness and even nastiness that sometimes happens. I'll pray for grace=

for you, that the Lord give you a big heart, and that like him you have  
t=

he  
patience to suffer insults and not to hit back.

Glad you ended up liking the wedding hoo ha. It is good to walk down the aisle with someone else so you don't have to get all the attention, though I'm very sure you got it all anyway. =

My brother Dan is in town. We're going to do a small bit of Rome=

this afternoon. =

Love you lots sweet . =

Mr. Keating =

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Mon, 15 May 2000 16:00:58 -0400  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <200005151601\_MC2-A506-2F0E@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Replied

Dear

I feel so bad for you. Sounds like school is really a kind of crucifixion for you at the moment. But listen, this is the time not to

let the way you're feeling sweep you away, and to keep perspective. Yes

things are rough, and yes it sounds as though you're facing some tough challenge

at school. But remember some very important things: (1) how you do in school doesn't define who you are, it's just something you do; (2) who

you are is someone very special and dear to God and to your friends and to me

and nothing changes that; (3) you should only be ashamed about things you

know you did wrong, not just things that you did badly. If you get a bad

grade, you can be ashamed only if you know you never studied or tried;

but you can't be ashamed if you did try. You can be disappointed, but that's

a very different thing.

Hang in there, I know you'll do fine even if it's hard

while. Not much more I can do from here, but I'll pray for you. Love

you lots and lots.

Be sure to check with me before becoming a high school dropout

addict who does nothing but watches B movies. I have some opinions about

that.

Mr. Keating

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Fri, 10 Nov 2000 14:13:42 -0500  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <200011101413\_MC2-BA72-B52D@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Read

Please don't feel so bad that you haven't written! I know very well that it isn't because you don't like me, and I don't get at all upse=  
t  
by it. I just thought you were probably very busy. Which sounds about right. (But what's this about hoeing? Have they got you planting tomato=  
es  
for a good winter crop?) So, , you need to remember my philosophy o=  
f  
letter-writing between friends: don't write out of guilt, write when you have something you want to say. And be really sure that I love you lots,=  
  
and never think of you without a smile coming to my mind. I was just eag=  
er  
for a little news, so I decided to ask for some. =

I love the name of your new piano teacher. What part of Antarcti=  
ca  
is she from? I've never seen a name like that. Much more interesting th=  
an  
Sue Smith or Ed Eck. Tough to write love poetry about though. I hope sh=  
e  
turns out to be just what you suits you.

Really sorry to hear that things started out rough at school. =

People can be remarkably dumb. Or rather nasty, which is worse. I can understand you being upset by it, it's no fun. Just be sure to remember two things: one is that this silliness won't last. People actually do g=  
et  
better at this kind of thing with a little maturity. The other is that y=  
ou  
need to fight inside yourself to be sure you don't start thinking about yourself the way some other people are thinking about you (or say they ar=  
e;  
this kind of thing is often caused by jealousy, even though the people doing it don't realize it.) If you were an ugly kid with no personality and no style and no brains I'd have to gulp hard and tell you just to do

your best to ride the thing out. But as it happens, you're pretty and  
fu=  
n  
and interesting and sweet and intelligent, so the kind of thing you're  
facing is just silly. Only be sure you don't start believing the silly  
gossips and saying to yourself, "There must be something really wrong  
abo=  
ut  
me, or ugly, or stupid, otherwise they'd be nice to me." Good  
reasoning,=

but based on the false idea that kids in 10th grade are logical. Truth  
j=  
s,  
most tenth-graders want everyone to be exactly the same as they are:  
dres=  
s  
the same, look the same, enjoy the same music, hate the same people,  
thin=  
k  
the same guys are cute, same same same. A form of insecurity that with  
luck they'll eventually get over. You on the other hand are not a  
typica=

I  
15 year old from (I for one am delighted about this), and  
that's enough to have the pack of clucking ducks start clucking at you.

=  
So  
you realize how dumb it is, and you do your best to respond with grace  
an=  
d  
love, and you remember who you really are in the eyes of God who finds  
yo=  
u  
dazzlingly beautiful, and if you can you laugh it off. =

Good work in your classes. Sounds as though that side of high  
school is going fine.

Rome just turned cold. No snow though, but the summer is  
definitely gone. Everything is still green, and occasionally we get  
real=  
ly  
lovely blue-sky days. So far I am not dead from motorino driving. I'll  
let you know if that happens.

A kiss and a big hug, I'll be praying for you as always.

=

Blessings.

Mr. Keating

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Fri, 24 Nov 2000 15:10:00 -0500  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <200011241510\_MC2-BC06-40BA@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Forwarded

Sweet

Happy Thanksgiving to you too!

We had turkey here, and stuffing, and tortellini. OK, so it wasn't quite an American Thanksgiving, but they tried. We even had pumpkin pie,=

though the crust was really bad. Not an Italian delicacy.

We had a big football game afterward and I threw a couple of touchdowns, so I figure it's time to retire on a good note.

When is your Confirmation? You'll have to let me know the dates=  
o  
I can be praying for you, for a massive infusion of the Holy Spirit to make your heart glad and your mind strong and your body healthy.

The Lord is very close to you I have often experienced the love he has for you. I know it's tricky to know how to love God back. You can't hold his hand, or give him a hug and a kiss, or see him and talk to=

him. But he's still close, inside you. Your desire to be good, not to hurt people, to want to know him even though you think that you don't, is=

itself a sign that he is within you, working in your heart, living inside=

of you. Otherwise you wouldn't want to know him, and you wouldn't want to be a good person. You'd be very happy just being a nasty selfish snobbish girl. But you aren't, and when you do act nasty or selfish or whatever it disturbs you and you wish it were different. This is a sure sign of the presence of Christ in your heart. So you have to start there. You do ha=

ve  
a relationship with Christ, it's just that you don't experience it much.  
=

And I'm very sure that the Lord wants to draw you yet closer to himself  
s=  
o  
that you do really experience his love for you.

Any suggestions? Sure, I have a few. First, be sure to  
remember=

who the Lord is. He is the one who dreamed you up. When there was no  
su=  
ch  
thing as , he was thinking of you, and how beautiful you would be,  
a=  
nd  
what a joy it would be for you to be alive. He called you by your name,  
and gave you life. And now he hovers over you like a mother over a  
babe,=

crying when you cry, hoping with you when you hope, inspiring good  
things=

in you, and always, always he hopes that you will ask him for the one .  
thi=  
ng  
he is longing to give you: himself.

Have you ever heard lovely music? That's just an echo of the  
loveliness of God. Have you ever experienced love and tenderness for  
someone? Your love is only a faint copy of the love and tenderness God  
h=  
as  
for you. Have you ever wanted someone to do really well, and hoped for  
them, and been really glad when things went well? God is like that  
towar=  
ds  
you, only ten times, a hundred times stronger. He's what you're really  
longing for when you long for a good friend, or a trip to Italy, or a  
fun=

and peaceful time with your family. He's the source of all our desires,  
and he wants to fulfill them. He's the best friend you could ever have,  
and unlike human friends, he never leaves, he never goes off in a huff,  
h=

e  
doesn't get jealous or tell stories about us or put us down. And he's  
th=  
e

one person in the universe who really understands every  
thought and emotion, every anxiety and hope, every experience. And if  
yo=

u  
let him have his way with you, he will make you into a creature of such  
loveliness and strength and joy that you won't know yourself. =

So try this: spend a little time every day, ten minutes if it's



a=

ll

you can manage, and find a quiet corner where you can be alone and be  
wit=

h

God. It's OK if you don't feel much. Just close your eyes and gather

yo=

ur

thoughts and remember who God is, and tell him that you want to know him  
better. He'll surely find ways of showing himself to you, and of taking  
you by the hand and leading you into the adventure he has carefully  
arranged just for you.

I'll be praying specially for you as you get ready for  
confirmation. And maybe you could write back and tell me a little more  
about your experience of God. And answer this question for me if you  
can=

:

If I could give you anything you want in life, success, friends, peace,

a=

dream boyfriend, a hot car, a villa in Italy, what would you ask for?

Wh=

at

is the deepest desire of your heart? What do you most hope for when you  
think about your life, not just today or this week, but your life as a  
whole? =

Love you scads, (A scad is more than a bunch, similar to

=

an  
oodle, way more than a lot.) Miss you too.

Your favorite Italian Doc. =

Be sure to send me the date of your confirmation!

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
To:  
Date: Wed, 29 Nov 2000 08:10:40 -0500  
Subject: Message from Internet  
Message-ID: <200011290810\_MC2-BC86-6860@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Replied

Thanks for your letter. Spirited and honest. I'm honored by  
you=  
r  
confidence, too.

, I'm wondering something here, which I'll mention and let  
y=  
ou  
decide whether or not it fits. You spoke of being filled with sour  
emotions, and lots of this is understandable: you're dealing with some  
objectively tough stuff, both at home and at school, and despite being a  
remarkable fifteen-year old, you're still fifteen, which if nothing else  
means that your emotions are bound to be bouncing off walls at regular  
intervals. It's one of the tough parts of being your age, and a lot of  
i=  
t  
is just physical. So I'm not surprised at your experience, and  
certainly=

not disappointed in you, in fact I think it's a great thing to be able  
to=

see yourself and to face what you see. Lots of people never get half  
tha=  
t  
far, it takes courage. Easier to stick your head in the sand and  
pretend=

and keep repeating that everything's all right and I'm an incredibly  
wonderful person and it's always THEIR fault. So brava! ragazza, for  
bei=  
ng  
willing to really look at yourself. I hope you know that it doesn't  
chan=  
ge  
anything about how I see you; I still love you as much as ever and think  
you're wonderful. =

But anyway, here's what I'm wondering: you said that you have a  
hard time forgiving people for stuff they've done in the past.  
Sometimes=

what's behind this is: you have a hard time forgiving yourself. What I  
mean is that if we are constantly feeling guilty, and remembering all  
the=

stupid things we've done, and take our own sins and weaknesses really  
har=

d,  
then we'll probably do the same towards others. It's a beautiful thing  
f=  
o  
wish never to sin. But it's even more beautiful to be so taken with  
love=

for someone else that you don't much notice yourself, even your sins. =

That's how it is with us and Jesus. He loves us deeply and tenderly,  
not=

because we're such brilliant and perfect people, but because he sees  
more=

deeply, and knows how lovable we are. He longs for us, and delights in  
making us into better people, happier, freed from anxiety and sin and  
hatred, just because he loves us so much. Once we realize this, we  
don't=

take our sins so seriously. I don't mean that we aren't sorry for them,  
=

or  
that we stop trying to be good. But when we fail, we say, Yup, there I  
g=  
o

again, that's me, but the Lord loves me despite that, and in fact he's  
changing me, taking away all my guilt and sin, making me day by day into  
=

a  
person of light and love. =

If once we can learn to forgive ourselves the way Christ  
forgives=

us, then it's lots easier to forgive other people.

Anyway, when you find yourself behaving in ways you don't like,  
t=  
ry  
to get into this habit: go right to Jesus in your mind, just as you are,  
and say, "Lord here I am, being an idiot again. Change me please." or  
"Lord I'm really angry right now and I know I shouldn't be, but there it  
is, I am." or "Father in heaven, I really hate this place right now,  
giv=  
e

me grace to have patience." Bring the Lord right into whatever you're  
experiencing, even the bad stuff, especially the bad stuff. Then he can  
touch it and change it for you into something that will make you grow  
wis=  
e

and strong.

And keep remembering who you are . In the eyes of the Lord  
(and he never makes mistakes) you're a beautiful and lovable girl who  
delights him, and he has great things for you, now and next year and in  
twenty years and till you die, and then the fun REALLY begins. So hang  
o=  
n

tight and keep close to Christ, and remember his great love for you that

never stops no matter what you find yourself doing.

And send me the date of your confirmation.

Around here it's been wet. Rainy season. So everything is still=

very green, but if you go out without an umbrella, look out, it's sure to=

absolutely drench you. Today it's crystal clear, and you can see the mountains in the distance. Outside my window is a little palm tree, not quite like Minnesota. I miss the snow. You'll have to spend an extra fi=

ve minutes once just enjoying it for me.

Dr. Zuke =

From: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Return-path: <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>  
Sender: "Michael J. Keating" <michaeljkeating@compuserve.com>

To:  
Date: Sat, 6 Jan 2001 11:01:51 -0500  
Subject: message from internet  
Message-ID: <200101061102\_MC2-C0CF-6062@compuserve.com>  
X-Status: Read

Sweet

Buon Natale! Which is Merry Christmas in Italian.

You mentioned that you get conformed in May. I'm hoping you mean=

t  
confirmed. Don't need any more conformist type people, nosiree. When  
yo=

u  
know the actual date you can send it to me so I can pray for you.

Lots of love, and many good things for the coming year!

Mr. Keating

Sweet

Lovely to hear from you. And thanks for all the news. Poetry, choir, photography, not bad. Sounds as though you're seizing the opportunities given you. As for the state competition, the key of course=

is how you dress. You've got to nail the judges even before you say anything. Make a statement! Express yourself! Like maybe a black felt hat at with two-foot red and yellow feathers. Or a leopard-skin vest above with=

pink spandex tights below. Or one of those wooden masks from central africa that give nightmares just to look at. Or walk on stage leading a large yak by a rope through its nose, only never mention it at all.

I hope I am being helpful.

In any case I'll look forward to hearing your recitation. With or without yak.

Duck?

I am now feeling sorry for those three love-smitten lads who were spurned by the object of their dreams. I hope they haven't gotten desperate? No one throwing himself under a train? No marching off to Darkest Amazon saying that "my life is now as good as over"? Poor fellows. Probably drowned their sorrows in a couple of six-packs of Milwaukee's Best off in the woods. On the other hand, they might have been planning to do that anyway. But it is still nice to be asked.

Duck?

Thanks for whatever help you were able to give with invitations. I know it was a kind of logistical thing. But I mostly appreciate the willingness. And yes, help look after for me. I'll probably be too occupied to see her much. It's the way these weekends go; no one really sees you. Hi! Hi! Hello! Hellooooo! Yes, me too! Fine, fine! =

Been a long time! etc. And then you become a little strange. The whole thing is like being in music video. Images, people, greetings, smiles, one after another, and it becomes hard to be at rest and be natural. Besides the fact that you're getting ordained to the priesthood and trying to handle that immense reality at the same time. AND you're trying to look good in a black suit with a stiff round collar, which is a great preoccupation for me as you can imagine.

Love you, It will be good to see you and have you around, =

even if we don't get much time together. And after all, this time I'm coming back to stay for a while. So we'll have our chances to really catch up.

Con affetto,

Michael