

NCYC's adoption theme rings true for one Baltimore teen

✘ As a reporter, sometimes you get caught up in getting a quote from someone and then life throws you a curve. Carissa Zukowski did just that while I interviewed her at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis. When St. Louis youth minister Pat Sprankle sent Carissa over, I didn't know anything about her other than the fact she was from the Clarksville parish. She talked about how this was her first year being involved in youth ministry and that she, as a high school junior, was seeking a stabilizing rock in her life going into college. "I love it," she said. "The most growth is in that I'm able to make decisions for myself, morally, and that this is what Jesus wants me to be doing. This is your direction. You don't need these distractions that keep popping up in high school." And this is where it gets poignant. Carissa began talking about workshops that she took part in and how the presenter had an adopted child. Also, singer and presenter Joia Farmer delivered a keynote address at NCYC talking about adopting her daughter and about how Mary is our adopted mother. "I'm also adopted from Korea," she said. "I love that connection. I feel like the speakers are speaking to me." Carissa was put up for adoption when her South Korean birth mother was pregnant. She came to the U.S. when she was three months old. "I went through a time when I struggled with my adoption- accepting it," she said. "I thought, 'Why did God separate me?' There was a lot of hostility in that relationship. I guess it was understanding that God put me there for a reason and seeing how much I do belong with this family. They are my real parents. They raised me. The way I'm being raised with the Catholic faith is something I think is supposed to be happening. This is what God wants me to be doing with my life." Carissa's open honesty was a revelation to me and brought home the human story of NCYC. Thanks, Carissa.