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while I am at work. Caleb is now 8 months old, 18 pounds, and very happy and healthy. God smiled on us and made my dreams come true. I am grateful."

— Cheryl Shepard, program supervisor, Catholic Charities Community Services, Rochester

"So much to be thankful for! Specifically, I am thankful for the many faces that I see around here that speak to me of God's love and care. There are so many occasions when individuals, young, old, long-time residents, new neighbors from Kenya, give evidence through their smiles, visiting, giving of food, giving their time, their listening ear, strong hands — their presence. Thankful that God is giving them the love, strength, insight into how we let God's love be known, be real in our place at this time. Through them God speaks and love grows. I give thanks!!"

— Sister Elizabeth Conheady, SSJ, St. Bridget/St. Joseph Parish, East Bloomfield

"I am thankful for the dignity of geese stopping the traffic to cross Elmwood Avenue and the agility of the squirrels on my early morning walk; for my conversion to Catholicism and our beautiful sacraments; for the purring of my kitten as she sleeps on my chest; for the Holy Ground at Mercy Prayer Center and all those who share our journey; ... for the opportunity to serve as a laywoman and be respected and acknowledged; for the ability to see, walk, talk; ... for memories of my lifelong friend killed on 9/11 when her plane crashed in Shanksville, Pa., and the support of the people in Shanksville; for the joy of giving to the poor, and the privilege of having lived in the Third World in Central America and having traveled to the Middle East and to Europe; for the glory of music; and for the miracle of birth and the holiness of a peace-

ful (hospice) death, because all of these are a mere sampling of the glorious blessings our Creator God showers upon us."

— Barbara Smullen, pastoral associate, Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Rochester

"I am grateful for the faculty, students and parents who make up St. Rita School faith community. Three hundred fifty teachers and students who can sit in the gym in silent prayer plus parents who choose our school for faith development along with knowledge make me thankful that I am a Catholic school principal."

— Sister Katherine Ann Rappl, RSM, principal, St. Rita School, Webster

"I am thankful that God introduced me to my wonderful and loving husband, Matt. I am thankful for the love and friendship that we share that has enriched both of our lives. I admire him for so many reasons; his faith in God and his willingness to share it with others is inspiring. I am a better person because of Matt, and I am blessed to have his unconditional love and support. He is truly my greatest gift from God."

— Jennifer Hinton, Guardian Angels Parish, Henrietta

"I'm very thankful for my family. I love my family very much. Lately we've been stronger and more supportive, very close. Since we lost my brother we have been very sad, but we are happy we still have each other."

— Ryan Posadni, sixth-grader, St. Charles Borromeo School, Greece

"I'm thankful that my brother didn't go to the war in Iraq because he could have died. Another thing I am thankful for is my dad because he has helped me through hard times and he has always been there for me."

— Melissa Zorij, sixth-grader, St. Charles Borromeo School, Greece

The Forum

"I am thankful for my parents because I am able to talk to them about anything. They also encourage me to use my talents in many different ways."

— Nick Newhart, sixth-grader, St. Charles Borromeo School, Greece

"My loving family, friends, good health, a strong faith and a new job in a compassionate and supportive work environment where I feel I can make a difference, are just a few of the things I'm thankful for!"

— Michael Gehl, director, Catholic Charities of Schuyler County

"I am thankful to God for faith. It is faith in a merciful God that allowed me to care for my terminally ill husband. It is faith in a loving God that opened my heart to love again. It is faith in a forgiving God that helps me to move past the hurts that I have been dealt. It is faith in a radiant God that brightens the shadows that sometimes darken my path. It is faith in an eternal God that keeps my earthly life in perspective."

— Valerie Collins, Good Shepherd Catholic Community, Moravia

"I am most thankful for my mother, Jean Mercadel. My mother was diagnosed with lung cancer 1 1/2 years ago, after living a very healthy life. She has shown me how helping others and trusting Jesus Christ as my Savior can get you through the toughest times. She has shown me unconditional love, and I honor her as my mother, my angel, my friend, my strength and my hero. I thank God every day for my mother."

— Christina Mercadel, Guardian Angels Parish, Henrietta

"As newlyweds, my husband and I served together in India with the Peace Corps. I am deeply grateful for that experience — through it, I learned to love the precious global

body of Christ and discovered the need to work for global solidarity."

— Kathy Dubel, justice-and-peace coordinator, Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier

"What I am most thankful for is my son, Michael, who was born on Thanksgiving day 1993. He is my husband's and my only child. He completed our love and we became a family."

— Mary E. Greenblatt, diocesan office of Evangelization & Catechesis

"I am thankful for my loving family. Some people have only a dad or just a mom. I have two parents and two 'sometimes wonderful' brothers! A lot of kids are only-children, but my brothers keep me from being bored. Although they can get under my skin, I'm still grateful for them."

— Gabriella Ferrera, sixth-grader, St. Ambrose School, Irondequoit

"I am thankful for my parents because they both are a lot of fun and have great personalities. My mom plays tennis with me. It's so much fun that neither of us cares who wins or how we are playing. My dad and I play football in the house. We made up some games to play with the football. My parents are great people. I love them."

— Sam Cotton, sixth-grader, St. Ambrose School, Irondequoit

"I am thankful because I have Mom and Dad. Some children don't have moms and dads."

— Gianna Santillo, first-grader, St. John the Evangelist School, Spencerport

"I am thankful for the Army because they are keeping us safe."

— Mitchell Henshaw, first-grader, St. John the Evangelist School, Spencerport

"I am thankful for a wonderful world. God made it so good for me."

— Connor Kennard, first-grader, St. John the Evangelist School, Spencerport