

Catholic education has helped me to form roots in the truth, enabling me to rejoice in the life and opportunities I have been abundantly blessed with. In the words of St. Catherine of Sienna, "Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire." I take courage and strive to be compassionate in life's everyday moments like St. Therese of Lisieux, and find strength in St. Dominic Savio's initiative to live purely and in a self-giving nature.

In my Catholic school I have found role models not only in the saints, but also in the students, faculty, and religious who yearn to be God's beloved. Their examples have led me to desire knowledge, veritas, and connection with others.

At my first May crowning in kindergarten, the 8th-grade girl who was voted "most like Mary" by her classmates and teachers crowned the Blessed Mother. This began my journey of faith; striving to be a better person each day. I long to immerse myself in love for Christ's Sacred Heart. Due to my Catholic education and support from my family, I grew up falling in love with the Easter Vigil, adoration, and hymns.

In 7th grade, I was introduced to Sr. Liz, a Salesian sister, whose words of wisdom became a catalyst in the questioning and marveling of my faith. With her assistance, I started a club called "The Positive People," which focused on true forgiveness, recognizing role models, determining what happiness is, and "little acts of kindness." The Positive People Club lives on in my school even though Sr. Liz and I have both moved on.

My catholic education inspired me to become involved in my community. I joined my Church's choir, a liturgical dance group, a religious film company, a Peer Ministry Leadership Team, and became a counselor at Camp Wow.

At Camp Wow I studied new ways of prayer, such as music, and grew in relationships with others. I experienced God more intensely and discovered that a relationship with Him is always changing and that it takes time to decipher His path for us. A close relationship with God can be a struggle, but in the words of my favorite band, Tenth Avenue North, "We are free to struggle, but we are not struggling to be free."

At _____, one teacher opened my eyes to new ways of thinking, questioning, philosophy, and the world and its emotions, allowing me to further contemplate my vocation. Participation in Senior Retreat Team, and Bible Club has led me to study the ways of the Dominican pillars and continue in my Salesian roots.

I realize that I do not have to "be" anything. A priest at my parish would, when I talked about my worries, stop me and say, "just let the Father love you." I do not have a clear path but I have the guide, the Church. In this busy world, it is important to be the Mary, and not the Martha all the time. God does not prevent me from living my life; He wants to be included in it. His love shapes the way I live my life. I am becoming who God meant me to be because I let Christ show me who He is. The band, Switchfoot said, "I'll run until my heart caves in. No, you haven't lost me yet." I can give everything and it may never be enough, just as Mother Theresa expressed, but it is not my world, it is God's. I take action so that He might set the fire through me. If I have to "be" something, I will be God's child.

I made the decision to study theology with the hope of joining the education community. If my parents had not made the sacrifice to send me to Catholic school, I may not have found the courage to follow this path. My greatest desire is to share the captivating love of Christ, enhance my understanding of beliefs, and find relationship with the One who breathed the stars. I am

thirsting to engage in what it means to be human and to learn from others on their adventures of faith. Because of my Catholic education, I am gradually becoming who I am meant to be, and that is joyful.