



2020 Confirmandi

St. Francis Xavier (College) Church

The Jesuit Parish in the Heart of St. Louis
3628 Lindell Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63108
314-977-7300
sfxstl.org

August 23, 2020
Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Sunday: 8:00 am, 10:30 am, 4:30 pm. Please RSVP at sfxstl.org.

Online Masses will be posted on our YouTube channel. Subscribe here: tinyurl.com/collegechurchmass

Weekday Masses: 7:15 am and noon Monday through Friday, 5:15 pm Monday through Wednesday, all in main church.

Sacrament of Reconciliation: Mondays and Wednesdays 10:45 am through noon.

MISSION STATEMENT

We, the members of St. Francis Xavier College Church, form a welcoming Jesuit parish community. As followers of Jesus Christ, we praise God, love our neighbors as ourselves, celebrate liturgy and the sacraments, engage in lifelong formation and proclaim God's reign of justice, mercy and peace.

PARISH INFORMATION**E-MAIL ADDRESS:** church@sfxstl.org

The Parish Center is closed if St. Louis City Schools are closed due to bad weather. Activities and events are also cancelled.

Hours: Monday - Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Saturday we are closed & Sunday: 8:30 am to 1:00 pm.

Bulletin Notices: must be submitted to church@sfxstl.org by noon on Thursday, ten days before the bulletin date. Holidays require additional time.

Infant Baptisms: Visit the Baptism page on the SFX website, www.sfxstl.org/baptism-1, for information on infant baptisms and required preparation class. Baptisms are celebrated on the first and third Sunday of the month, at 12 pm. Contact associatepastor@sfxstl.org with questions.

Christian Initiation of Adults: contact Joe Milner at 314-977-7305 or joseph.milner@slu.edu

Marriages: contact Sandy Hauck at 314-977-7303 for scheduling and preparation information.

Funerals: contact Sister Carolyn McWatters at 314-977-1797 or carolyn.mcwatters@slu.edu or Fr. Dan White.

Disability Access: Our church has an elevator and hearing assistance system. Please see an usher for assistance.

Parish Registration: Available online at sfxstl.org/parishioner-registration or at the Parish Center front desk. For questions email church@sfxstl.org.

Youth Faith Formation: Available for Pre-K through eighth grade. Classes meet September - May on Sunday mornings. Ages 3-6 use the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Contact Terry Edelmann at terry@sfxstl.org or Julie Kilian at julie@sfxstl.org for more information.

Liturgy of the Word for Children: Suspended until further notice due to the pandemic. Contact Terry Edelmann at terry@sfxstl.org.

Safe Environment Program Compliance contact Terry Edelmann at terry@sfxstl.org.

PASTORAL STAFFPastor

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Youth Faith Formation

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Outreach Coordinator

Tess Sanders
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Outreach—Vista Volunteer

Sheltoria Love
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Wedding Ministry

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314-977-7303
sandy@sfxstl.org

Choir Director, Music Ministry

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Pastoral Council Chair

Lisa D'Souza
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Deacon

Jim Griffard
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Coordinator of Liturgy

Sister Carolyn McWatters, RSM
314-977-1797
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Pastoral Ministry

Bridget Brennan
joy@canainstitute.org

PRAY FOR THE SICK

Ted Agniel
 Mary Lou Ampleman
 Bruce Blattenberger*
 Mary Bruemmer*
 Linda Castillon*
 Edgar & Ingrid Canavan
 Diane Flynn
 Monica Gunn
 Jessi Haselhorst
 Paul Hanson*
 Mary Jane and Butch Henning*
 Christina Bah Ireland
 Terry Kippenberger*
 Pat March*
 Mark Marsh
 Karena Menard
 Nancy Partridge* & Glider
 Bob Powers*
 Ruthann Redmon
 Mark Roddy*
 Dennis Saunders*
 Jennifer Saunders*
 Family of Candace Sexton
 Art Taylor*
 Jacob Verghese
 David Williams
 Julia Williams
 Lisa Zimmerer*

* Long-term

Prayer requests to:

church@sfxstl.org

Or visit our website, sfxstl.org, and find the form under “Parish Life.”

Join our intercessory prayer group on Zoom,

Friday mornings at 9 am:

Contact Bridget Brennan at

joy@canainstitute.org for info.

FROM THE PASTOR’S DESK



There are few aspects of Catholicism more distinctive the papacy. This defining element of the Church’s leadership has evolved and changed over 2000 years, but it has also remained constant. There have been great, good, and bad Popes over the course of history. Being human beings, what else might we expect? The Holy Spirit is working always, no matter the personal holiness or talents of the successor to Peter.

We believe the Christian community is the Body of Christ made visible in the world. Therefore, we take seriously the role of leadership in our community. Christ is ultimately the Head of the Body. Despite some appearances to the contrary, Catholics don’t worship the Pope! Yet we are aware of the essential task of the Pope to lead the Church. Catholicism is vast and diverse stretching all over the globe. Perhaps the most important job of any Pope is to be a symbol and reminder of our oneness in Christ.

Peter had no idea what the Church in 2020 would look like. He only knew that he was being called by Jesus to care for his people. One could suggest as well that Peter was a rather unlikely choice given what we know of him from the Gospels. But who better to lead a sinful and struggling people than a sinful and struggling person?

Updates on Mass and Confession Schedules

The livestream Mass returns to 10:30 am this Sunday. The 4:30 pm Mass will be the Campus Ministry Mass.

We have two Masses Monday through Friday: 7:15 am and noon. We will also have a 5:15 pm Mass Monday through Wednesday. They are held in the main church.

Confessions are available on Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:45 am to noon. More days will be added if needed.

School Supplies Needed



College Church is once again partnering with the Peace & Justice Committee of the Rock Church to collect needed school supplies for students in Pre-K through 6th grade at Columbia Elementary School.

If you are able to provide any of the below items, please drop them off to the College Church parish center at 3628 Lindell Blvd. 63108 anytime Monday-Friday between 8:30am-12pm or 1-3 OR on Sunday in the bin in the vestibule. We will be collecting items through Tuesday, September 8th. Contact Christine at christine@sfxstl.org or 977-7309 with any questions.

Thank you for any donation you can provide!

#2 Pencils

Glue

Black pens

Markers

Dry erase markers

Hand sanitizer

Crayons

Colored pencils

Pencil cases

Loose leaf paper

Notebooks

Backpacks

Folders

Spiritual Direction

Rob Garavaglia, a St. Francis Xavier parishioner and a student at the Aquinas Institute of Theology is looking for persons interested in receiving spiritual direction. This is to fulfill a practicum requirement for Aquinas' spiritual direction certificate program. If you would like to receive spiritual direction, or would like to more information, contact Rob at [\(314\) 750-9871](tel:3147509871).

TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMATION: HOW TO EDUCATE YOUR COMMUNITY ON FAITH AND JUSTICE

On Thursday, September 3rd from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. CDT Jack Jezreel, founder of JustFaith Ministries, and Leila Oakley, staff member, will be offering a presentation on Zoom, entitled "Tools for Transformation: How to Educate Your Community on Faith and Justice," introducing the programs of JustFaith Ministries. We invite you to learn about the powerful educational offerings that JustFaith Ministries can provide, all of which can now be used online on Zoom.

If you would like to participate or have any questions, contact Cris Fischer by email: crisfischer@icloud.com or phone/text message: 507-269-6268.

To view our latest video, please go to justfaith.org and click on "Play Video."

Hope you can join us!

Peace,
The Staff of JustFaith Ministries

Continued Tuesday Witness for Racial Justice

A group of St. Louis Catholics will continue to keep vigil for Racial Justice and Black Lives on the steps of St. Francis Xavier College Church [every Tuesday evening from 6-7pm](#). All are invited to join in silent prayer and bring signs calling for racial justice. The group is looking to include others in creating programming or reflection during these vigils. If you, or a group you're connected with, would be interested in leading one Tuesday, please email Billy Critchley-Menor, SJ at wcritchleymenor@jesuits.org.



THANK YOU MASK MAKERS AND MASK DONORS!

We were so excited by the generosity and number of parishioners and friends who responded to our request for face masks for the children at our sister parish of St. Peter Claver in Punta Gorda, Belize. More than 25 volunteered to help us reach our original goal of 800 masks! Talk about success...we ended up receiving over 2000 masks of many styles and colors! They were beautifully made and durable, many washable.

It is because of you that the children and the families of St. Peter Claver and St. Martin de Porres will be safer from the spread of Covid-19 as it begins taking a toll in Belize. Schools have not yet reopened as originally planned but the masks are greatly needed at home, in the outlying village communities and eventually in schools as they reopen. We will be sending some photos of the children after they receive the masks.

Thank you too for purchasing your Fair-Trade coffee, tea and chocolate products on-line so we can continue supporting the on-going identified needs at our Sister Parish of St. Peter Claver. You can do so at:

<http://www.sfxstl.org/buy-fair-trade>

To get more involved in the Fair-Trade and Sister Parish committee efforts at College Church, contact Christine Dragonette at christine@sfxstl.org

SOCIAL MINISTRY

Green Corner

“Opt to Act” for Earth



REI Co-op is sponsoring Opt to Act, 52 simple weekly challenges to reduce your impact on the Earth, get active, and leave the world better than you found it. This well-researched website (Just Google REI Opt to Act Plan), actually helps with information on why and how to take these steps.

This week's tip:

Week 39 (August 23-29): Celebrate the 104th anniversary of the National Park Service by getting outside. Check the National Park Service website if you'd like to visit a park and want to know their COVID-19 policies: <https://www.nps.gov/findapark/index.htm>

August 23, 2020

Sunday
8:00 am Fr. Stewart, S.J.
10:30 am Fr. White, S.J.
4:30 pm Campus Ministry

August 30, 2020

Sunday
8:00 am Fr. White, S.J.
10:30 am Fr. Stewart, S.J.
4:30 pm Campus Ministry

The 10:30 am Mass will be livestreamed, and Outdoor Communion will be available. RSVP at sfxstl.org.

Bulletin Articles

email bulletin articles to church@sfxstl.org before Thursday at noon 10 days before the bulletin date.

Celebrate our First Communicants

This year 26 of our young parishioners will receive the Eucharist for the very first time. Please keep these children and their families in your prayers. The special First Communion Mass is Saturday, August 29 at 10 am, with some families electing to receive the sacrament individually.

Our Communicants are: Seamus Crowley, Xavier Daus, Jocelyn Edson, Nora Eggleston, Abby Gutting, Ken-na Haines, Lucas Haines, Rowan Hutchinson, Luke Kaikati, Emily Kraemer, Harold Lang, Dylan Lauver, Samuel Langeberg, Elena Larson, Drake Liebermann, Caroline Mamah, Samuel Marietta, Seamus Miller, Sofia Moreno, Eli Palis, Caroline Reynolds, Adelyn Simpson, Daniel Strong, Charlie Smallwood, Dominic Timko and Aspen Weintraub.

A special thank you goes to catechists: Julie Kilian, Amanda Taylor, Kristy Connell, Benedetta Malindi, Therese Beabout, Sam Agra, Julia Kreiser, Tracie Simpson and Lara Marietta.

Faith Statements from Confirmandi

On the next pages, you can find Statements of Faith written by our 2020 confirmandi. They are receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation today.

Please keep them in their prayers as they embark on this new phase of their faith journey.

Statements of Faith

As part of the preparation for Confirmation, our students were asked to write a “Statement of Faith,” expressing why they wanted to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, along with some aspect of their faith journey. These reflections were read by the students at a special celebration on August 19. We are making these Statements of Faith available to our entire parish community and hope that you will read them and be inspired by the heartfelt, honest and thoughtful reflections of our young people. Please join our parish family in celebrating their full initiation into the Church today.

Stella Bishop

My connection with God is the people I have found in my life. Jesus’s whole life was about helping people, and in class I found I related to the story of when Jesus washes peoples feet because he was doing service to others. When our class visited the homeless shelter it really opened up my eyes and it felt good helping them, like what Jesus was doing. There was one little girl who, even though she went through many hardships, was still smiling and dancing. I feel like my faith is about doing service to others because that’s when I truly feel God’s presence. Even though I went to a Catholic school as a kid I have gone more in depth about my faith more than ever and I have learned many different ways to show your faith. Every time I went to RE I learned new things and did many fun activities. One of the hard things I had to do was when I was told to find a patron saint. I didn’t even know where to begin. I felt like none of them matched what my life was like or what seemed like me. However, I kept researching until I found Saint Catherine of Alexandria. I read about her story and I felt like the story really called to me. She had many qualities I would aspire to have and had many aspects of her life that were like mine. Like how she loved to read, or how she liked art. Catherine was brave and stood up against evil even in the face of death. Her story was very different from other saint stories and it really caught my attention. I am glad I didn’t just end up choosing a saint that I thought was okay and decided to keep looking for the right fit. I hope during my life, as a Christian, I will look up to my Patron saint and seek guidance from her, because Catherine is who I would want to be as a person and a member of the Catholic community.

Confirmation Saint: Catherine of Alexandria

Confirmation Sponsor: Helen Gannon

Molly Browne

Everyone has their definition of being a good Catholic. Some people think it’s going to Mass every Sunday or memorizing all the passages in the Bible. Others think it’s attending Mass on Christmas and Easter or praying every once in a while. Each one of us views Catholicism differently. There is one thing on which we can agree. God is always here for us. God is in everything we do, even if we don’t notice Him. Life can get crazy, but if you take a second to breathe, you might see Him. Two figures in my life do an amazing job of noticing His presence.

My Lola, my grandmother, is the most religious person I know. She has made an impact on my faith. When I was little, she taught me how to pray the rosary. She reminds me of how God is a large part of my life. Every time I see her, she tells me how important my faith is and to love others the way God loves me. She has inculcated me with her teachings. She makes me a better person. My Lola’s way of living out her faith has transferred to my Mom. From there, my Mom has adapted her way of exploring her faith.

Since I was little, my Mom has reminded me of the three essential elements in life. She said, “You have to remember your family, relationship with your brother, and most importantly, faith in God.” She taught me to keep my faith in the most difficult times. God will always be here to help me. I believe in keeping God in your thoughts no matter what the situation you’re enduring. Some of us only go to God when we are in times of need. I try to see God in everything I do. He is constantly in my thoughts. If I need help, I will ask for it. If I’m doing well, I will continue to keep Him in mind. From my mother’s teachings, I have come up with my ideas about my faith.

I believe being a good Catholic is seeing God in everything and believing in His existence. I may not go to church every Sunday or know all the Bible stories, but I am a good Catholic. I believe God is real with every ounce of my being. I can feel Him and see Him in my everyday life. I am still exploring and learning about my faith. I question and learn new things all the time; in church, RE classes and at home. I think God makes everything happen for a reason. He puts challenges in our lives to make us stronger. You have to learn from your past and mistakes to grow and intensify your faith. When you're doing something right, you might feel it. You might feel called by something. I feel it in my heart. This whole statement has been about what feels right in my heart. My faith and beliefs are still changing, but for now, this I believe.

Confirmation Saint: Elizabeth

Confirmation Sponsor: Andy Streiff

Scout Carpenter

To me, faith is like a rainbow after a thunderstorm. Thunderstorms can happen at any point, but no matter how bad the thunderstorm is, more likely than not, a rainbow appears afterwards to remind you that better days are yet to come. The thunderstorm represents conflict in my life, and the rainbow represents my faith. I have experienced more thunderstorms than rainbows especially these last 3-4 years, but I'm at the point where the rainbow is more clear even without a thunderstorm; the point where the rainbow shines through the dark stormy clouds and shows me the way out. I've gotten to know myself and my faith better than anyone else while looking for that rainbow. I know now what to do when I feel lost and that is to turn to my faith and remind myself it'll all be okay.

Confirmation Saint: Gertrude of Nivelles

Confirmation Sponsor: Posey Carpenter

Nico Del Rosario

Maybe when I was younger, I didn't quite believe in God; I didn't understand Him. Now, I believe in God because what I've learned is intriguing and because my family believes in God. His powers and actions are mysterious and complicated. He has existed since the dawn of creation, which is unbelievable! I am also faithful because of the connections between Catholicism and world history. Some of what we read in the bible, we can also find in history books! I think this is very interesting, and it makes me want to know even more about God and our faith.

I love that God is so loving and compassionate to those who believe in him and worship him, no matter their race, gender, or age. He has helped us so much through the divine form of his son, Jesus. I am faithful to God because he tells me why to be kind, this is what the golden rule is all about. He even tells us to have hope for our future in this world and the next.

To me, to have faith is to believe strongly in something. I have faith in God our Father. I show this through praying the Our Father practically every day, through my prayers before meals, and through reading the bible. I live my faith through going to church, and caring for others.

I am proud that I am going to be confirmed in the Catholic church. It will bring me closer to God. I don't want my relationship with God to be fake; I want it to be made of righteous, pure decisions.

Confirmation Saint: Dominic

Confirmation Sponsor: Judy Nagy

Grace Dunson

Change always happens, you can't control it, it's part of life, but you can control how you adapt and respond to it. Imagine picking up everything and moving to a new place, while putting your trust and faith into someone, who you know will guide the way. This happened last summer when my family moved to St. Louis for my dad's job. Before that point, everything had been at peace in "my world". Little did I know it

would be turned upside down. During the move, whirlwinds of emotions flooded me, and questions ran free in my head. I always asked myself would I make friends? What would my school be like? Would anyone like me? Where would we live? As these questions came in my head fear, anxiety, and sadness ran free in me as well. However, I quickly remembered that even in times of trouble God is by my side with a plan for me. Although it is hard to let go of all the crazy emotions in my head, it was easier to embrace this curve-ball in my life instead of resisting it, knowing that God is with me. Knowing this, this move has been a good thing for me, because this experience has pushed me to become closer to him. As I got closer to God, I was more at peace with myself, and with him, by my side, he gives me the courage to try new things. For example, I was nervous about making friends and adjusting to my school, so as anyone does, I joined the volleyball team to get to know people. I know you're thinking, how does trusting God tie into playing volleyball? Well, if you're like me a person who has never played volleyball before, you need all the help you can get, but seriously even through a small thing like volleyball or meeting people on your first day, you have to trust him to guide you along the way. Additionally, my confirmation class helped me connect with him on a deeper level not just praying to him, but experiencing him in the little things like if someone came and talked to me for the first time, or even getting a "good job Grace" after a game, he helped me in a time of struggle and I hope someday I can help him too. There is one line in proverbs that describes my relationship with him. Proverbs 3: 5-6: "trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your path." These lines of proverbs speak to me because with God you have to be all in or not at all.

Confirmation Saint: Elizabeth of Hungary Confirmation Sponsor: Molly Uhlir

Thomas Dunson

"...where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy." - St. Francis of Assisi

There are many negatives in the world right now including world hunger, climate change, coronavirus, and political tension; it feels like nothing can get better. It's easy to feel like you're alone and you can't fix things, but through faith, there is hope. There's always a positive side that is revealed once you look through a lens of faith. For example, last summer I had to move from Georgia to St. Louis. At first, I was feeling despair, darkness, and sadness, but once I truly stepped back and looked at the situation and the opportunities to come, I gained hope, light, and joy. Faith has helped me make the best of things and has helped me approach bad situations with optimism. Looking through a lens of faith has also helped me to be nonjudgmental. It's important to not focus on the negative traits of people, and I often stop and try to understand their situations and impart love and compassion. Relating to the words of St. Francis, you have the chance to make light in someone's life and make a difference. For me, I see God most when serving others. I get to brighten someone's day and help them out through times of struggle. Through confirmation, I hope to strengthen my faith with God and to continue to confront challenging times with positivity.

Confirmation Saint: Francis of Assisi Confirmation Sponsor: Grayson Uhlir

Joy Garavaglia

Through my faith journey, I have always had questions about what being Catholic looks like. Until now, it has never been a choice. Even when my faith gets hard, I keep coming back no matter what. God always takes me back even when I make mistakes. I believe everything happens for a reason; it's all in God's big

plan. I may not always think that at first, but I am able to figure it out because of my faith. Whenever I talk to God, I know things will get better because of my faith.

Confirmation Saint: Teresa of Calcutta

Confirmation Sponsor: Cara Cross

Ella Hamlin

This is a very trying time for everyone. COVID-19 and quarantine have brought a whole new bout of struggles that we couldn't have imagined a year or even 6 months ago. In this time more than ever, we have to stay strong as a Church and a community. 2 Corinthians 5:7: "For we live by faith, not by sight." These days, we can't say what tomorrow will be like. We have to rely on our faith and on God to get us through this.

For the past 3-ish months, we have been attending Church virtually. Many parishes are livestreaming their services, and we must make do with this instead of actually being in a physical church. While it is nice to be able to watch the service and still have that time to pray and reflect, it is not the same as being together with everyone, and being able to accept the Eucharist. But we must remember that the Church isn't only a building we go to on Sundays. It is a community, a spiritual connection that helps us grow in faith. I think quarantine has really helped emphasize the connection party – we must find creative ways to connect and be with other people, and with God. Watching Mass on Sunday is definitely one thing that has kept my faith strong. Given that time to reflect and talk to God is nice, especially with how hectic and stressful the weekdays can be. I think everyone could benefit from having time to think about their faith every week, and pray and help further their relationship with God.

Another thing that has tested our faith is safety. We have been following the stay at home orders for almost 3 months, and it has certainly been difficult. We have to think about everything we do – when we go in public, we must wear masks. We must use hand sanitizer and stay 6 feet apart. These are all things that nobody would have anticipated a year ago. We couldn't even fathom how crazy life would be now. 2 Peter 1:7 says "and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love." Brotherly affection these days I think could be defined as keeping one another safe and being mindful of others. We don't wear masks to keep ourselves safe, we wear them to keep others safe. God can only do so much to protect us – it's not like face masks and hand sanitizer are going to come raining down from the heavens. And we can definitely learn from this: God can strengthen our and other's faith only so far. You have to put in the effort. I think this is another lesson we can learn from this situation.

All in all, I think quarantine and being so disconnected from our regular lives has helped me grow my faith because I now put more trust in God. It also reminds me to keep being kind to others, which is what God and His Son both want for everyone.

Confirmation Saint: Francis of Assisi

Confirmation Sponsor: Rose Haley

Ellie Hubbard

I feel most connected to God because I understand my faith better now from when I was a kid. I listen and sometimes understand the homily more now than before because I am able to connect to the Mass more on a deeper level. This connection to God has sprung up by going to Luke 18 when I was in 7th grade and attending youth groups at the St. Clement Church. Going to the Retreat through Confirmation class has helped my faith journey because during that retreat I was able to build more connections. At the beginning of this experience, while we were waiting for other people to arrive, the kids that were already there would run around and throw the football and frisbee. Just by doing that simple activity, I felt more connected to the people in my Confirmation class. Later on in that retreat, we split into small groups and through our small group talks I felt that I was connecting to God through the girls in my small group. What I loved most

about the retreat was that I learned different ways to pray which really help with my connection to God. Later on in the night, we talked at dinner and played games. At dinner we would take a break from talking about God and begin to talk about our personal lives. It was fun to eat with my friends and play different games.

I believe that God has a plan for my life. He throws curve balls so I can learn from it and grow as a person of faith. I believe God's plan for me is for my best life overall. God always sees the best in us no matter our past. And that's how I know God will always be with me throughout my life.

Confirmation Saint: Catherine of Siena

Confirmation Sponsor: Kath Arns

Tess Hubbard

To me Faith is like a tree. We need trees to live because they provide oxygen to us. Faith is the same because it gives us life when we are in the dark. There were times in my life when my faith brought me out of darkness. When I had a knee injury in Sixth Grade, it was hard because it was a long recovery. During this time, I was very upset and my faith helped get through all the pain and sadness.

Also during the school year, things can get tough and stressful. Sometimes I can hardly breathe but faith gives me air to breathe. This 8th grade year was very stressful as I prepared for high school. Sometimes I feel school takes over my life and leaves no room for my faith life. However, I went to a girls' retreat this year. During this retreat, all my worries melted away because I was able to connect to my faith. Being surrounded by all those girls made me aware how much love and faith I have.

One really hard time for me was when my Grandma died. This was a very hard time because this was the first time one of my grandmas died and the first time I was old enough to remember. This was a tough time for my whole family. When my Grandma passed away, it was very unexpected and that hit us all hard when we found out that she had passed away. This hit us hard in different ways for each person. For me, I was very upset because it was on Easter we found out she passed away. So I was talking to my Mom before we left to go to have lunch with my whole family about how I've been missing Grandma Grace and how we haven't seen her much, and my Mom said we will see her today and we can make plans to hangout with her soon. So, I was excited to see my family and as we waited for everyone to show up and time had passed, the only one not there was Grandma Grace. We waited a big longer but she didn't show up and this wasn't like her. We all got a little worried. We tried to call her but she didn't answer, so my Aunt Kath went to her house to see what was wrong. Moments later, my Aunt Kath called and she was crying that Grandma Grace has passed away. We were all in shock and all crying in my other Grandma's house. On this happy day, it became a very dark day and in this moment I realized I never got the chance to say goodbye. During this dark time, it seemed like there was no air to breathe—like all the air had been sucked out of me. But even during dark times, there is light because, even in the dark, God was and is still there for me. Even through the dark, there is air to breathe.

Even during the hard times, God is and always will be there for me. During the dark times, he showed me the light. For example, my Grandma Grace loved to go to Lone Elk Park because she loved seeing all the deer and elk. Now where she is buried is the only place you can find deer in the whole cemetery. I feel in my eyes it is God showing me that my Grandma is in a good place. Life is filled with many moments, with good and bad and through it all, faith is with me. My faith is a tree, it grows as I grow, and it gives me air to breathe.

Confirmation Saint: Elizabeth of Hungary

Confirmation Sponsor: Diane Hubbard

William Konradi

I've felt faith when participating in robotics. I'm on my middle school team and we had a successful season. When building a robot and participating in matches I am free to be myself and enjoy what I'm doing. Things that normally make me feel uncomfortable disappear. I am able to be me, and love every minute of it. That's when I feel faith the most in my life.

Confirmation Saint: Andrew

Confirmation Sponsor: Kevin Konradi

Kathryn Lueke

I'm usually good at writing essays, but this has very little structure to it. I've never put these thoughts on paper before, and frankly, the thoughts themselves have even less structure. I'm going to be honest: this was quite scary and quite difficult to write. This is because I feel very stuck when it comes to faith.

As an aspiring scientist, I feel overwhelmed by uncertainties and questions that seem to have no answers. It's in my nature to ask questions, always has been, and a lot of what I was raised on told me that questioning God or the Bible was, in no uncertain terms, *bad*. Unfortunately, doubts were still able to worm into my mind. One of the biggest ones I have stems from the very human tendency to form patterns where there aren't any. Just read about the constellations. The stars didn't confer among themselves to form pictures in the sky. A human just looked up at the sky and said: "I like these five stars that vaguely form a cross shape because it could conceivably look like a swan. I've now named the swan and am currently writing fanfiction about it." Our religion looks like a pattern to me, but I've been conditioned to think that since birth, and would therefore not be a good judge on whether anything is there or not—and I'm not a big fan of not feeling like I can trust myself.

I also love ancient mythologies, which is the root of another of my doubts. I've studied this subject quite a bit, but you don't have to dive too deep into those traditions before you realize that their gods are their ways of understanding the phenomena around them. There's a lot of overlap in the types of gods from all over the world—the sun, for instance, has gained many names over the millennia, but it doesn't matter if you call it Helios or Apollo or Frey or Ra, the sun is still a giant ball of exploding hydrogen. It seems as people discovered more about the things they assigned gods to, the gods just . . . dropped off. The sea wasn't Njord or Poseidon or Pontus anymore, it was just a big salty puddle. Our God could, to some, be called the God of death, consciousness and the edges of the universe. Those are the three biggest mysteries of modern science, and I see God evoked most often with one of these subject matters. I suppose I'm afraid that as soon as we figure out what happens to people when they die, God will suddenly be obsolete.

I know getting confirmed isn't going to answer these questions instantly or anything. I do hope, however, that St. Francis will give me a support network and a community in which to ask these questions and talk through my doubts. I hope that one day, I'll become comfortable with being uncertain. And while I clearly have a lot to work through, I am sure of one thing: faith is nothing without hope.

Confirmation Saint: Raphael the Archangel

Confirmation Sponsor: Jean Steed

Ava Martin

I have always found comfort in traditions, especially with my family and the community PSR has created. Faith to me has always been a support system to fall back on. I say “support system” because whenever a decision is made good or bad that I might question, I say to myself that there is a reason and things always look up. As I take this next step I try to bring more mindfulness to my everyday actions and to build my relationship with God. Confirmation to me is agreeing to following the path that God is influencing and leading me to be on with consideration.

Confirmation Saint: Elizabeth Ann Seton

Confirmation Sponsor: Ali Vassel

Riley Mihill

Faith means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. Faith is defined as “complete trust or confidence in someone or something.” But faith to me means our Lord Jesus Christ, Friends, Family, and Sports all of those connect to make what I know as life. But if you were to ask me what faith meant to me five years ago, I would have said Jesus Christ, Family, Friends, and Legos, and if you ask me 5 years from now when I'm 19, I will say something like this Jesus Christ, Friends, Family, and Money. If you noticed three of them never change and those are three of my most important things in my life. All of them circle back to our maker Jesus Christ who is the reason that I have family and friends. So things might change throughout your life, you might lose faith in your family, in your friends, in your money and your Legos, but one thing that is imperative to keep faith in is our lord Jesus Christ and the Church as a whole, and remember lost faith is never too hard to find.

Confirmation Saint: Bernard

Confirmation Sponsor: Cathy Jeep

Noah Mitchell

Where do I see faith? In my life there are many examples of it. My family is the strongest way I see faith. So, I am surrounded at all times.

Faith comes to me through my family, but in another way, joy. Joy means happiness and even though the word is simple, it has a strong impact on me because I live and thrive off of it. Whenever my Mom was sick and battling cancer one message she always made sure I heard was to think of the good not the bad, so in other words, thinking about the good things is joy. For example, when I am down from my challenges in life with school or sports I take a second to think of the joy.

This relates to how I compare my faith to joy and how I see god in my daily life. Going back to the question, where do I see faith, isn't as good of a question. It should be how I see faith and for that I have to say, my Mom relayed the message of joy that now I live life by and how I see faith all the time.

Confirmation Saint: Sebastian

Confirmation Sponsor: Jack Mitchell

Chase Morrow

To me, faith is like an onion... full of layers.

The onion's outer layer is made up of people who say they believe in God, but don't really live the life or practice the faith. It's really in words only.

Then the next several layers are people who believe in God, but their faith comes and goes over time ... they may stop going to church for awhile, then go back later... they turn to God when they need it but less

so when times are good, making their relationship with God kinda one-sided.

Digging a few more layers down, you find people that are moved by their faith, enough so that they try to make it a part of every thought and action. Their lives are guided by their faith.

And then there's the onion core, made up of folks who've dedicated their lives to their faith... serving others on behalf of God, like priests and nuns.

For me, up till this year, I'd say I wasn't even a part of the onion yet. I was really just aware of God and faith because of what my parents had done or told me to do. I was really just following along blindly.

But this year was different. This year my parents told me it was time to choose. That felt alarming. You could say it woke me up. Over the year I began to see faith in a new light. Prayer, something I had once seen as for people like priests and nuns, suddenly seemed a lot more accessible. This newfound understanding gave me the confidence I needed to start adding God to my life more often.

I also realized faith wasn't as strict as I thought it was. It isn't just for the folks at the core who practice their faith strictly. In my own life I've seen folks take a break from church, others who decide to go their own path, and another say they just don't know. Like the onion, I believe God loves them all, no matter what layer they are.

It helps me to think of God as always ready to accept you. Always forgiving. Always loving.

Now I have a choice. To stay or go. And I choose to stay because I believe this is the right path for me.

Confirmation Saint: Francis of Assisi

Confirmation Sponsor: Brynn Morrow

Brady Noonan

Faith in God is not something you are born with or that can always come naturally. It is something you have to practice, like a sport. By practicing, I mean you have to keep praying, going to Mass and thinking about God in order to get closer to Him. Some people have to learn that He exists. To learn that He exists, you have to keep practicing to try to see Him in your day.

Currently on my journey, I am still in the stage of practicing and seeing if He exists for me. I can understand why other people believe in Him, but I am still practicing to see Him in my days. I can keep practicing by paying attention in Mass and praying. If I can pray and ask God for things and see Him answering my prayers, then I would be more convinced that He exists in my life.

When I see people who have a strong faith in God, I think it becomes part of who they are. It can make people more emotionally stronger because they know they have someone with them all the time. God is someone who can take care of us and He can be a guardian. Even though I can see how He is in other people's lives, I'm still waiting to see Him in my own life. By getting Confirmed, I'm staying open to seeing Him in my life even if I'm not all the way there yet.

Confirmation Saint: Sebastian

Confirmation Sponsor: Jessica Helling

Lily Reinert

Before I even understood what the Gifts of the Holy Spirit meant, I experienced them in my life. I was taught each one in the Atrium. Courage, Piety, Counsel, Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge, and Fear of the Lord. As a child, the gift I could most connect to and easily understand was Fear of the Lord, or as I was always told, Wonder and Awe.

When I was little, I was filled with the gift of wonder and awe. I was amazed by all the smallest things and could recognize the wonders of the world. I still remember laying on my back in my room and staring up at the dust particles that would reflect the sun from my window. I would lay there and look at them and make up stories about each one and where they came from. I saw their importance. I was taken aback by the flowers in the Botanical Garden or the smile of one of my family members. I remember looking at the patterns and pictures in the stained-glass windows at church to see the way the light changed colors. Or, I would sit at Mass and gaze up at the stone carvings in the roof and wonder how people got them up there or how they were created.

My mom was one of the people who helped show me how important it was to give thanks for all that we had and were able to see. Every night I would sit in my bed and offer the same prayer with my mom. We would always start with the things I was grateful for. I had a list I memorized in my head: my mom, dad, brothers, plants, animals, etc. Then, I would list all the things I needed help on or the people I wanted to pray for; my grandparents, my neighbor, etc. Even at a small age, I saw what was important and thanked God for it.

As I entered middle school, things became harder to keep up. I continued to pray every night, however, sometimes I would have trouble falling asleep. One time when I was laying there, I remember just saying, "Well God, I don't know what to say. So, I guess I'll just tell you about my day, even though you already know the whole thing." From there, I began to realize that all those moments from my childhood were God's doing. I began to have conversations with God about my day every night. I grew closer to him and would talk to him throughout the day about various things. Yet again, I was filled with the gift of wonder and awe. Whether it was a friend's laugh or a kind greeting, I noticed how lucky I was to have God in my life.

As I grew older, I kept up my practices, however, towards the end of the year I started slacking on my discipline. I still had this special connection with God, but I wasn't as continuous and dependent on it as I could have been. I started to do a lot of other activities and become distracted. I continued to pray every night, but I didn't make it a priority and didn't feel the same connection as before. I felt like I spoke more than I listened. I began to keep procrastinating prayer. "Oh, I'll have more time later." Sometimes I would feel really guilty because I knew that I was pushing God away. I became easily distracted.

As I have now begun to enter young adulthood, I feel blessed with a really amazing life. However, it's hard sometimes. I have discovered my faults and failings. I know that I am human and sometimes it's hard. I have found that society is human too and also has lots of failures: death, violence, addiction. On the other hand, I am learning to be content with my imperfections. I am finding myself now considering that all the posters that say, "Let go" or "Live in the moment" may be right. I am learning that love doesn't depend on what you fail or succeed at. Looking back, I realize I have been very lucky to experience the gift of wonder and awe. When I was younger, it came easily to me. Now that I have gotten older, this gift is hardest for me to grasp.

Because I now find wonder and awe challenging, I have realized that I have now been filled with many other gifts of the Spirit (Courage, Piety, Counsel, Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge). For example: Courage. I have been given the gift of courage to face change, deal with it, and appreciate it. The hardest thing for me in

life is when things change. When I was younger, I was so against change, I hated moving to our new house that was only eleven houses down from our old one! I have now begun to realize that changing is hard, but there are pros and cons that come with a new stage.

Through all my ups and downs, I've had my younger cousins. My favorite thing to do is to hang out with them and be with them. I babysit each of them all the time and love to watch every aspect of their personality. I realize now, that my wonder and awe is watching them. Each one of them is filled with this joy for all things in the world. When I'm with them, a little bit of that awe from when I was younger comes back to me and I'm able to see it again. The special thing to me now is having awe of seeing the awe instead of seeing it. Throughout all of this, I realize that I have been blessed beyond comparison with so much. As I now have received more Gifts of the Holy Spirit, my challenge is to continue the awe.

Confirmation Saint: Lydia of Thyatira Confirmation Sponsor: Katie Mees

Nicholas Sheppard

Faith pushes me to be the best version of myself.

Every night, I pray for God to come into my heart to help me be more focused in school.

Every night, I pray for Jesus to come into my heart to help me perform better in school and sports.

Every night, I pray for Mary to come into my heart to help me be more considerate to everyone around me.

I use Faith to build me into who I want to be.

I want to be unique, the only me, the best me.

Faith is everywhere.

In school, with my friends and teachers, Faith exists. When I become the best version of myself, Faith is that feeling that makes me treat others how I would want to be treated.

Faith makes me a better person that others would want to be around.

I practice Faith to support a larger cause.

When I serve as an acolyte, I can appreciate the meaning of Mass and the fact that all sorts of people from everywhere meet to practice their Faith.

I feel that I can be the best version when I help others - and through being an acolyte I can do that.

Without Faith, I wouldn't be who I am. Faith has shaped me into being the best person I can be. I want to continue my path of Faith - to do more by myself rather than my parents making me. By being responsible for my own Faith, I can go down my own path.

Maximillian Kolbe is a great example of someone who believes in their Faith and honors it. I see him as a role model, someone to look up to. Faith, to me, is thinking about those whose Faith helps them to be able to be the best person they can be. Maximillian Kolbe does just that. He gave up his life to help Holocaust survivors, and without his Faith, he would have never reached that point. By looking up to a person with strong Faith, I am able to grow on my own Faith.

My Faith strengthens me to be the best I can be, the best version of myself. That is why I am proud to be Catholic and why I am excited to continue my Faith journey. It can be hard sometimes, especially in today's world, to keep up with a strong Faith, but through my life, I have found that by doing so, Faith can help me with any other challenge I face.

I want to continue my Faith journey in order to grow as the best person I can be.

Confirmation Saint: Maximilian Kolbe Confirmation Sponsor: Rosemarie Kuehn

Andrew Strong

Saint Joseph is the saint I chose because he is a carpenter and I also like to build things. My faith will change like my woodworking projects change as I go. When working on a project there are many steps, like cutting, gluing, sanding and finishing. Each step builds on the other. Even when I finish a cutting board it's never really complete. There's always something you can do to make it better, just like my faith.

Saint Joseph is also very caring and compassionate. Just like at the homeless shelter when we helped hand out food. We also made sandwiches for the people there. It made me feel good because I was helping people that were in need. In the end, this is my journey to get closer to God and my faith.

Confirmation Saint: Joseph

Confirmation Sponsor: Jim Brown

Katherine Teasdale

Faith is an abstract concept with many layers and complexities. That is why its meaning and importance varies between different people. Faith is what helps to get us through the most difficult parts of our lives. Faith, at its core, is the deep-rooted belief of good things to come. But faith isn't *only* a notion that people hold onto in tough times; is the importance of sympathy and altruism towards all people. When used as a moral compass, faith teaches us to accept and love all people. To me faith means optimism and compassion.

Confirmation Saint: Catherine of Siena

Confirmation Sponsor: Arlene Browne

Miriam Vega

Sometimes I feel like I'm not doing enough to connect with God. It's hard to see other people around me be successful in their faith, and then when I try doing what they've done, I don't get the same results. But when I do things that I enjoy, or that I'm good at, I feel at peace and can relax and not worry about being connected, I already feel it. It's as simple as singing or cleaning, it's relaxing and refreshing. This is my own way of connecting with God, using my own outlets to push everything else out of my mind and allow for God to come in on his own.

When I sing, I know that talent was given to me so I'm using it to express myself and it makes me feel good to be gifted in many ways. I look at these gifts as tools from God, having one talent or gift can lead to another talent. This just helps me use even more ways to find peace and use that space to connect with God.

If for some reason my singing outlet cannot be used, like say a scratchy throat, I draw instead. When I draw, it may seem tedious to some, but the process makes me calm and centered. I enjoy drawing people/different characters because it's fun to see how God works by making someone that doesn't exist yet. I enjoy playing around with different faces and hair styles because I feel that it's the best starting point to develop the rest of the character. When I start drawing a person or character, if it starts turning out how I envisioned, I enjoy showing other people. When I do this, it makes me feel accomplished and fulfills my sense of self.

God made me, and when I feel accomplished, I feel like God makes me feel accomplished. This is how I feel God in my everyday life. Not just by praying, sitting still, reading the Bible, or going to church. Everyone has their own views on how to be close to God, how to go to Heaven, etc. For me, I just need to be. I'll just be. Be myself, and know that whatever I do, God is with me with a helpful hand to guide me. I could not pray or go to church ever again, but our bond wouldn't break. God is light, and when I'm in the dark, he provides

me oil, and I get creative.

Confirmation Saint: Augustine of Hippo

Confirmation Sponsor: Karmen Vega

Ade Williams

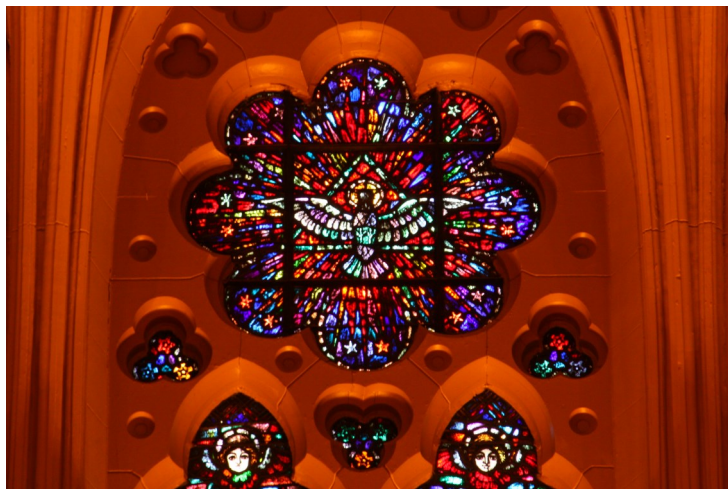
"For it is in giving that we receive." This is a quote from Saint Francis of Assisi. To me, faith means the connection and dedication you give to the lord. This particular quote from Francis of Assisi spoke to me. When I first read it, I thought *'that's not always the case. You can give all you want and not get recognition, nor a gift in return.'* But, as I thought about it more, dug beneath the surface a bit, I realized something. I realized that materialistic gifts can be great, yes, but the true gifts are the gifts that aren't seen. The gifts that you receive in unexpected ways. Here is an example. If you give up your day to aid the less fortunate, you are giving. And you will not receive any materialistic thing back. What you receive is far more powerful. You receive joy. And that in itself is the greatest gift of all. Faith is just like that. When you are faithful to the Lord, it can be time consuming-- but rewarding. Between reconciliation, mass, service etcetera. When I am faithful, I give the Lord my time. To me, time is precious. To an ordinary person, the concept of time is the minutes ticking by each hour. Luckily, I am not an ordinary person. Time is like reading a book. You never notice how much you've read until you're on the last page. One day, inevitably, we all will all run out of time. When I give my time to the Lord I get rewarded. When I pray, I feel a weight lift off my shoulders simply because the idea of having someone to confide in. All my worries instantly melt away. There are times in my life where unfortunate things have happened to me. My first reaction would be to be angry at the Lord and ask why he wasn't there to prevent it. Little did I know he was there the whole time. I truly believe everything happens for a reason. Whether it's a lesson learned, or a sign, there is always something to take away. Instead of getting upset, I should trust in God and whatever obstacles he throws at me.

"Life is the most difficult exam. Many people fail because they try to copy others, not realizing everyone has a different question paper." God has a specific plan for each of us, and instead of worrying about every bad thing, look for the good. Just breathe, you're right where you need to be, and God makes sure of that.

To conclude as I started, I would like to share another quote from Saint Francis of Assisi: "Remember, when you leave this Earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received, only what you have given..." There is more to this quote that I am leaving out deliberately. We all have different things to give. You can't control the way the current flows, but you can control which way you row.

Confirmation Saint: Francis of Assisi

Confirmation Sponsor: Emily Perulfi



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