

Joy Garavaglia approved profile

Living Our Faith

Meet Joy

I've been a parishioner since: 2017. I was a student at St. Margaret of Scotland then, and my family joined College Church for the religious education program. I was confirmed here, and my parents – Rob Garavaglia and Bridget Rush -- and I remain active parishioners. My brother, Anthony, is away at college.

Living my faith: In my sophomore year of high school, I became a teaching assistant in the parish's religious ed programs. I work with the program's instructors and SLU students to lead small groups of kids who use hands-on activities to bring the lesson of the week to life. I've also been a volunteer in the summer social justice camp for middle schoolers.

One of my most memorable experiences was taking part in a Solidarity Trip to the Border with other classmates. We went to El Paso, and attended a bilingual Mass at the border – with people in Texas on one side of the congregation and in Mexico on the other -- in memory of those who died on their journey to the US. We talked to border patrol officials and girls and boys who were awaiting processing. We heard their stories, and learned that the best way we can help is to gain knowledge and share that with others, to build empathy and understanding.

Why I'm involved: My first reasons for volunteering at SFX's religion education program were to meet my school's requirement for service to others and to see if I like teaching and working with children. Now in my third year, I find that I'm deepening and learning more about my faith through the eyes of the young students. They teach me more than I teach them. Working with the kids puts the values of faith into action, and that is powerful and moving.

Three words that describe SFX: Passionate, Inclusive, Faithful

My neighborhood: My family lives in Tower Grove, near the Missouri Botanical Garden. It's so close to everything, including The Hill, where I have a job ringing out customers at Missouri Baking Co. (Favorite pastry: cheesecake!)

Fun facts: I'm a senior at Notre Dame High School where my activities include cheerleading, playing on the tennis team, and serving on the Student Diversity Committee. After graduation, I'll be going to college and preparing for a career in early childhood education.

Recently, I was selected to be Notre Dame's 2024 recipient of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Model of Justice Award. It was inspiring to be one of 26 local students who recognize the dignity of people from all backgrounds, and to be honored with them at a special Mass at the Cathedral Basilica that commemorated Dr. King's birth and legacy of peace and justice.

(Note: Congratulations, Joy. The SFX family is proud of you.)