

# Church of Corpus Christi

## Confirmation Testimonies 2008

Saturday, April 12, 5 pm mass

*What does it mean to be a follower of Christ?*

### **Matt Hire**

The question I chose to answer is what does it mean to be a follower of Christ. I think that what it means to be a follower of Christ is having faith in God. Because I don't see how someone can follow anyone or anything that they don't believe in. I came into Confirmation confused with my relationship with God, and coming every week to church and to Confirmation I feel very close to God. Being a follower of Christ is important to me and knowing He is always with me and is always listening just shows how much He loves me.

### **Michael Plante**

In confirmation we are taught that being a follower of Christ is a life-long process that has many steps and sacraments. We are also taught that beside those sacraments are things we do to show others what we are Christians, loving, caring, and believing.

In this skeptical world it is hard to see Christ. Many people are like Thomas, they doubt him because they cannot see him. One of our challenges as followers of Christ is seeing him with our hearts and not our eyes. That's why most of us are here, we've been learning to trust our hearts in seeing god.

Part of believing in god is seeing him in everybody, from the poorest to the richest. As Jesus said "as you have done to the least of my brothers you have done to me.", Most forget that. I did, like when I started Dorothy day, at first it was a requirement, something I had to do. It eventually became my social justice project, because I realized why I was there.

Christ always taught us to love one another, even our enemies. He challenges us to do this when a bad driver cuts us off in traffic, he challenges us to stop an argument even if it feels good to fight, and he challenges us to calm our temper when we get angry at another person.

To be a follower of Christ is about more than just listening to the word, it is acting on it when others might not, and when it may make someone not like you. We are meant to do the right thing, even if it's unpopular, like helping a kid who is being bullied in school or talking to someone who doesn't have very many friends.

Four years ago in my 5<sup>th</sup> grade class was a boy that nobody

liked, I didn't like him either. He would purposely annoy people, because he liked seeing their reaction to it. One day, a few of people got together with the intention of teaching the kid a lesson. Everyone knew about it, nobody cared, they all didn't like him. When I heard about it I actually wanted to join in. But as I thought about it I began to remember the words "treat others the way you want to be treated."

I don't remember what I said but I called the whole thing off.

It wasn't comfortable and it wasn't easy, but sometimes following Jesus means that we aren't comfortable but it's what we're called to do.

## **Luke Rengel**

To be a follower of Christ means to follow the example that Jesus showed us. It means to stand up for what you believe in, even though it may not be the most popular thing to do. It means respecting the beliefs of others as well. I try to always treat my friends with respect, treating them the way I would like to be treated.

Being a good Catholic and a follower of Christ doesn't just mean going to church every Sunday. It means being kind to the people around you in everyday life. It means to live your life helping out when others are in need. You can comfort your friends if they are feeling down. If you see someone who needs help, you can help them out without being asked or making a big deal about it.

Trying to do the right thing, respecting others and being kind to those around you is what it means to be a follower of Christ.

## **Michel Tume**

Hello my name is Michel Tume. To me, being a follower of Christ is to be like a disciple. Christ wants us to follow in his footsteps like the disciples did. He wants us to learn from him and act on what we had been taught. Just as learning how to love our neighbors and our enemies as if it was our self, to treat others how we want to be treated, to have faith in God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, and to keep the Ten Commandments holy. Christ also told us to respect everyone and all things, to take care of these things and people who we love.

Christ has taught me a lot of things and I try to keep those things in my mind while I go to church and pray for things in my life. At school and at work, with friends, I will always try to do what is right and my best that I can. I would use Christ's teachings to guide me. I try to use what I learned from Christ in my daily life, just like the disciples did. To be a follower of Christ is to act like Christ would. I am not necessarily doing what Christ did, but I am learning how to do those things.

Christ said, whatever you do to the least of my brothers, and sisters, you do to me. I promise to keep that in mind. I want to thank all my teachers, the parish, friends and family who have helped me in this journey.

*Why do I freely choose to remain within the Catholic Church?*

### **Camila Davila**

Why do you freely choose to remain in the Catholic Church?

Catholicism is a way of life and it defines me as a person.

Ever since I can remember, the Catholic Church has been a part of my life. I remember going to church with my grandma, since I couldn't even talk because she devoted her life to the Virgin Mary and prayed the rosary her entire life. I also remember going to mass every Sunday with my parents. My family has been very influential in my life, as well in the decision I am taking to join the Catholic Church.

I was baptized when I was only 8 months, my parents made the decision for me to be part of the Catholic Church and now I'm old enough to validate their desire to be part of the Church.

When I was 11 years old I attended a mass celebrated by Pope John Paul the II, I remember seeing all these people, there where at least half a million and they were there for the same reason... the love of God. This experience made me realize how gigantic the love of God is. It inspired me and made me happy to belong to this community

God and the Catholic Church have always been with me. I love this community of God and I don't know what my life would be without it. I choose to remain in the Catholic Church because I love its customs, and traditions and the way of life and I feel honored to be part of this community and I'm sure the Catholic Church will guide me to make good decisions and share the love of God with others.

*What has been an important spiritual experience in my life?*

### **Anne Auger**

I have had some pretty hard times in my life; times where I really needed God right by side helping me out. I never really thought I would need God's help that I would be able to deal with it on my own, until my grandma went into the hospital. I was so scared for her. She wasn't doing very well and they thought she might die. She was in the hospital for about two weeks, and I prayed every night that she would be strong and that God would protect her. When I prayed, I felt like I went to a different place, and that it was no longer in my hands, I had done everything I could to protect her. Then she started to get

better, and even though she has been hospitalized since then, she has been pretty healthy.

Another time I really needed God was on the first day of middle school. I was going from a school with 100 6<sup>th</sup> graders, to 450 7<sup>th</sup> graders. I was so nervous I wouldn't know anyone in my classes. I was scared everyone else would be making new friends and I wouldn't. I prayed the whole night before the first day, and then that entire day too. And, lucky for me everything turned out fine and I made a ton of new friends.

One more time when I needed God was when my friend ran away in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Her parents were really scared and I had no idea what to tell them. I felt really bad because she had talked about running away before that and I just told her not to do it. I didn't tell anyone like I was always told I should do. I asked God all night to bring her home so her parents could stop worrying about her. I was scared for her too, in my entire life I had never been that scared about something like that. She came home at around midnight that night, safe and sound. I have discovered that no matter the time of day or the situation God is always there and willing to help you out.

*What do I see as a major challenge facing young Catholics today?*

## **Dane McGough**

There are many problems facing Catholic teens. One of the biggest problems is the media; there are a lot of bad messages that are shown such as drugs, violence and disrespect.

A problem is music. There are a lot of bad messages explained in music. It is hard to get away from bad music because it is all around teens. You hear it many places. A good example of this is at school you hear it so much there. There are a lot of people playing their music loud and you even hear it in gym class when you are running and playing games. I listen to this kind of music sometimes, but I don't think it is the problem because some people take it seriously and do the things explained in the songs. I just think of it as a form of entertainment.

TV is a problem as well. A lot of the shows that are popular have bad messages in them. The shows have reference to drugs, violence and many other things. I personally watch TV and I don't take things I see on the shows seriously. Again, I just think of it as a way to relax and have fun.

Another problem is the internet. There are millions of sites with negative influences. The way I keep away from these things is to just not look for them or be with people who do not look at negative things. I use the internet some but I use it to talk with friends and to have fun. I think this is a problem for Catholic Teens, but is it only a problem if we mimic these things.

## Merideth Glass

In society today, Catholic teens are confronted with many challenges to their faith. We are pressured by our peers to engage in sinful and inappropriate behaviors. There is temptation everywhere, and remaining on the path to righteousness is especially difficult.

But in addition to that, even those on the right path may question themselves and their own motives. I, personally, had a time where I was questioning this. I asked myself why I was in confirmation. Did I really want to receive the sacrament, did I really believe in the Catholic Faith? Or did I only say that I did, because I knew that it was what my parents wanted me to do? Although I suspected that it was the latte, I continued attending Wednesday night classes praying for an epiphany. I knew that if it did not make up my mind it would be wrong for me to go through with getting confirmed.

Luckily my epiphany came. While we were on the spring retreat, someone was giving a speech about one of their personal experiences. I had a moment where I realized that Catholicism is the only thing that truly makes sense. God loves me, and he wants me to be the best person I can be. I realized that getting confirmed would only help me grow in myself and my relationship with God. I'm proud to be a Catholic and I'm glad to be getting confirmed.

## Morgan Motzel

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING YOUNG CATHOLICS TODAY?

The first commandment: You shall not have false gods before me. This first instruction from God seems like a no-brainer today. We don't worship the moon, trees or statues today because we know they don't give us eternal life. But what about celebrities, TV, or even sports? Some teenagers might say, "TV is not a god," or "When I listen to music I'm not committing idolatry." I ask myself a few questions,

How often am I watching TV shows?

How much time do I spend texting my friends?

How much do I know about my favorite celebrity?

Okay. Now some different questions.

How often am I affirming my faith?

How much time do I spend talking to God?

How much do I know about Jesus?

Who is really getting the praise and worship? If we are being honest with ourselves, we can admit that we **spend more time** with personal enjoyment than we do with God. About 75% of our confirmation class said their biggest barrier to prayer is time. Music and sports are not necessarily evil, but by letting these distract me from God, I lose our way. When I make room for Jesus first in my hearts, I create the strong, spiritual foundation that is necessary to a strong, spiritual existence. I strive to make time to pray EVERYDAY because through all he has done for me, it is clear that God deserves the number one spot in my heart.

Sunday, April 13, 8:30 Mass

## *Why do I freely choose to remain within the Catholic Church?*

### **Ben Stasny**

The question I chose to answer is: Why do I choose to remain in the Catholic Church?

I feel that I have a strong connection with the Catholic Church and as I grow older I want that connection to grow I want to strengthen my knowledge of what the Catholic Church is all about.

It is important to me to know that the Lord will be there right by my side to give me comfort and be there when I need him. I have strong family support and am very close to my Mom, Dad and Brother. I also have close friends such as my sponsor Ellen who I also feel I can turn to during a time of need. They will support me throughout my life and encourage my belief in God and in the Catholic Church.

The support I have from family and friends and with the knowledge of God watching over me gives me a great level of comfort. I know they will help me make difficult decisions and I will be able to turn to him when I need to do things which are difficult.

Getting confirmed is a big decision for anyone. It is important to give it a lot of thought since you are "confirming" yourself to your faith, and in my case, the Catholic Church. I know I am ready to take this step. I know that God will be there helping me where ever I am going in life and I have great family support to rely on. It is a great feeling that I would never want to give up, and that is why I choose to remain in the Catholic Church.

### **Matt Walter**

I freely choose to remain in the church because when I was younger I thought that God wasn't important to me and that I didn't need to stay in the church but now that I am older I found out that God is important and that I have someone to turn to with my problems. The church is always reliable for anything going on in my life. I know I trust them with anything I say and any problems I have going on in my life. The church is also a good place to help the poor and the less fortunate like the rummage sale coming up and Feed my starving children.

The church has been changing the lives of others and it feels good to do that and to support others. When I feel down I know that I can just stop in and feel welcomed in to God's community. That's a good feeling to keep me going in life. I stay in the church with God because the people that help me out and that love me are always there for me. I would like to say thanks to the people and God for helping me out through my confirmation time.

*In what person or situation do I especially see the Holy Spirit working in the world?*

### **Laura Burnes**

The Holy Spirit can be seen and felt in the world in many ways, but often I think that it becomes clearest in the aftermath of natural disasters. When a natural disaster occurs, like a hurricane, tornado, flood or earthquake, people often ask why, how could this have happened? While we don't always have the answers to these questions, the Holy Spirit nonetheless guides us. One natural disaster that I still clearly remember is Hurricane Katrina, but I don't only remember all the horrible things that happened during the storm, I also remember the prayers, love and support that came out of the hearts of many people after the hurricane had passed. The love, kindness and prayers that came from people who might not even know anyone who suffered is the Holy Spirit at work. After any natural disaster, family, friends, neighbors and communities all come together as one to make the best out of what is left, sacrificing time, energy, money- all for the greater good of humanity, all for love and all for the hope for a life even better than the one before. This to me truly is the Holy Spirit at work, bringing together people from all walks of life, united first by a tragedy, but, finally and forever, through love and hope.

### **Lucas Brown**

Hi, I am **Lucas Brown**. When I first started trying to answer this question I ran into a problem. I didn't fully know what the Holy Spirit was. I felt like I knew a little bit about it but how was I going to explain it to the parish? So I decided to do a little research. I came across a couple good definitions.

1. The Holy Spirit can be defined as God's presence at work in the world.
2. It can also be described as the power by which God the Father and Jesus Christ accomplish their will.

When I read these definitions, the first person I thought of was my grandpa, Don Kramer. The reason I picked my grandpa is because he is one of the kindest people I know. He is very active in the church. He is a big part of the church choir and just very involved in the parish as a whole.

He also participates in perpetual adoration every week at St. Rose Church. He volunteered for that when they first started it at their parish and he's been doing it ever since. We give him a hard time when he leaves family functions or events to take care

of that commitment to the church, but I guess it's like spending time with God, who is also a huge part of his family.

One year my grandpa built a computer to sell to help raise money for the St. Rose parish. He loves to find good deals on parts for the computer and put them together for a whole system. He was surprised at how much it went for at the church festival auction and how much money it raised for the church. He now says he's going to do it every year. It's amazing what some of your time and money can do to produce more money for good causes.

Besides this he does meals on wheels regularly, and is similar to the Good Samaritan in the bible stories. He is so reliable in those commitments in helping other people. My brother and I go with him a lot over the summer and help him deliver meals and it's amazing how many people are so happy to see my grandpa.

Aside from helping in church he is also active in the community. He is retired and still is always busy. One of his loves is working with computers, so he uses this to help others in the community. He will fix computers when they're down and help create homepages for people. My computer illiterate parents as well as a lot of their friends have gotten so much help from him. He's our own private Geek Squad! "Well shouldn't he do that for you and your family anyways Lucas?" is probably what you're asking. Yeah he should is my answer to you, but the thing of it is, is that he helps every time. He's never too busy. It doesn't matter who's on the other end of the phone. Whether it's family, a neighbor, a friend of one of his kids who he barely knows, he will always help out and take time out of his day as long as he knows he is doing the right thing. It makes him happy.

One of the things that have helped him throughout his life is his strong faith. My mom told me that when she was young she remembers my grandpa telling her he never missed a day of church growing up. His honesty and integrity is also an important part of who he is. The thing is, it isn't difficult for him to be that way. It's just natural to him. I think of myself in comparison---Why does it seem so hard for me to be honest sometimes or have the integrity like my grandpa?? I'm thinking that I'm actually doing OK. I guess if I work at it long enough, by the time I'm his age it will all come naturally like it does for him. I think it is all part of becoming a man and choosing to be a follower of Christ. No offense grandpa...but I've got a long time to work on it!

I am at the point now where I am choosing whether or not I would like to be a follower of Christ. I believe my Grandpa's example, and the friends I am going through confirmation with, have helped me get where I want to be in my Catholic faith. The parish has helped a lot too, with programs like Give and Grin, and the whole preparation for confirmation. I have learned a lot

about myself and my friends in the parish through this experience.

I know it will take a long time to be as secure with my faith as my grandpa, but I also know that in the end it will all be worth it, and Confirmation is just another step in my quest towards a life with God.

I'm an athlete and I know if I work as hard at training my mind and body to be a good Christian as I do to being a good athlete, I will be a success in life. Thank you grandpa, for unknowingly showing me how the Holy Spirit is alive in you and how easy it can be to be a servant, a messenger and disciple of the Lord.

*What do I see as a major challenge facing young Catholics today?*

### **Anthony Barrett**

Hello. My name is Anthony Barrett and the question that I chose to answer is what is the biggest challenge that teens face today?

I think that the first response to this question would be "there's not enough time." Either there's practice today or our school group is meeting, or my friend just invited me over. While time is an issue, it isn't the biggest obstacle. I believe that the toughest challenge is sorting out our priorities.

It is true that things come up from time to time that conflict with mass or religion class. However, if we can make God our first priority, we don't need to worry about conflicts. It's important to remember that Jesus died on the cross for us, so spending one hour with him during the week shouldn't be a struggle.

What helped me put God first in my life happened during a Confirmation class in Lent. We listened to a tape describing exactly what happened to Jesus when he died. It told about the nails, the whips, and all of the pain. It was very powerful to me, and I took it to heart. I always remember this tape when I have to make a decision between going to church or going to a friend's house. Since God gave up so much for me, I can spend a little time with Him.

I think that people overlook that a lot. They don't think about what God did for them. They don't realize that God gave up so much for them. That is how teens need to deal with their priorities; they need to weigh their conflict against spending time with God. The decision seems clear to me, and that is how I deal with this problem.

## **Sara Enzenauer**

What do I see as a major challenge facing young Catholics today?

When I first thought about this question, activities came to mind. I could easily say that I'm too busy, I don't have the time. I joined many programs at school, getting involved right away with as many things as I could. As the year drew on, and this day crawled closer and closer, our Confirmation teachers encouraged us to pick a question as soon as we could and start writing it. At first I wanted to pick this topic, because I thought it would be the easiest one to write about, but my class was cautioned not to choose it unless we really thought about it.

That night, on the ride home I did think about it, and the more I thought, the more I realized that there are so many things that prevent teens from following their faith. I realized then that I had got off my routine of praying daily. As I was debating the reasons, it popped into my head that maybe I wasn't sure how to pray, how to approach God. Would you greet him like one of your friends you see in the hallways in school, or like you greet your grandparents? What do you say, and how do you say it? I also thought about why do I have to pray. Can't he just see that I need help, why do I have to ask for it? Really I think that the major challenges that young Catholics face are they are not sure how to approach God when they pray, and they also don't see the point in stopping and praying.

As I processed all of this, I wondered how I could apply this to my own life. I could continue to participate in helping out with the rummage sale, or participating in Mass. Just helping out with what was easy for me and not requiring too much effort on my part, isn't maybe the best way to approach this. Then I thought that maybe I was supposed to help out with something I had never done like joining a Bible study group. Then at the spring retreat, we were given a sheet of the activities in which we could join in order to stay involved with the church. There were many options, some that I had never considered, and some I was currently involved in, or debating. Although I didn't choose all the options I am interested in, I am keeping them in mind for the future.

After thinking of all my options that I have to grow closer to God, I discovered just how much I want to grow closer to him. I plan to do this by helping others in ways I have never tried before. I want to get into a habit of praying more often.

I'm going to continue listening to Christian music, and be an example to others through my Christian actions. I also want to help out with the church activities, like Sunday school, brunches, and any volunteer work that is offered. I'm still looking for a way to connect more with God, but I'm sure in one of these ways, I, and many others, will be able to connect more with God.

## **Ryan Miller**

One crucial problem I think that's concerning the young Catholic community today is "okay, I'm done with Confirmation, now what?" Most people I've talked to after their confirmation seemed

relieved. Not because of the event itself, but that they don't need to go to church anymore. And one of my friends even got an Xbox out of the deal! I guess he thought it was worth it, that it was reasonable to grin and bear this year-long "waste of my time" for an Xbox. You don't grin and bear Confirmation. You don't hope for religion to go away and not have to come back. You have to get involved one way or another. The least you can do is attend mass, and I can assure you that it's not that hard. If you were going to just get confirmed and then not go to church, then why get confirmed at all, I mean really. And I understand that some people got confirmed, to have it under their belt, and I understand that some of you had to get confirmed and your parents made you. But, this has been a long an awesome experience and you don't want credit for that? You go through all of that, dragging your feet the whole way and then when it's all over, you decide to walk back from whence you came? Heck, considering Confirmation, that's a pretty long walk. I can help you, fellow confirmands. I can help you get involved, I can show you all the choices and all the variety you have after Confirmation. You can lector, help teach at Sunday School, usher, volunteer at Parent's Night Out, or any other church event, help out at Dorothy Day, do Give and Grin, become a Sr. High student, heck, study for the priesthood if you want! I will show you. Confirmation isn't just something that'll wear off when you grow older, it will be with you your entire life. So lets make it part of our life.

## **Justin Adams**

Hi I'm Justin Adams. There are many challenges facing young Catholics today. Many of us say that sports take up too much of our time so that we have to put praying off until later. We also say that homework interferes with praying and that once were done with it we have lots of other things to do so we just say will pray later on. On the weekends when were not busy with school and have lots of free time to pray we say that we cant pray now because were about to go hang out with friends or something. Some of us young Catholics like to say that talking on the phone or texting is a reason that we don't have time to pray. But the excuse I use the most would be that I'm to busy playing video games or on the computer so I tell myself I will pray later but I end up putting it off until I fall asleep.

Young Catholics today have to just pray. We can't keep putting it off. If we plan on building a better relationship with god we can't have praying be our last priority all the time. We also need to pray so that we can confess our sins. How are we going to confess our sins if we keep moving the lord to the side?

## **Lauren Spadine**

All children are taught from a young age to not give into peer pressure. In elementary school its don't make fun of others. In middle school its don't drink alcohol and high school is just say no to drugs. But no one ever says a thing about what

might happen because of that. Catholic teens are pushed to avoid the temptations of sin but then are judged because of it. I can't count how many times I've been told, "You're such a catholic girl," because I don't swear and I don't like it when others do. Were told not to give into temptations, but today, if you don't, you're an outcast. You're the one sitting on the edge of the group because you don't want to drink. And when you ask others to avoid people that will get them into bad things, you're a prude. In today's teenage society, a major challenge facing Catholics is to resist the sin we're surrounded by. But, an even bigger challenge is to not let the judgment of others break us.

### Sunday, April 13, 10:30 Mass

*What does it mean to be a follower of Christ?*

#### **Jack Doering**

At a school mass one day the Archbishop Harry Flynn told us a story. It was about a well noted scientist who was also a friend of his. This scientist gave up his studies in science and began to study theology. After a few years studying, the bishop asked him about his studies. The man answered, "Well, it seems that the more I learn, the less I understand." This is true with the teachings of Christ. And the only way we can truly understand these things is to believe. That is what being a follower of Christ means to me. And I have noticed that in my life when I ask God for something the only way it will be fulfilled is to truly believe. We have to believe fully in Christ and how he works in our world for him to be able to do his work. Blessed are those who don't have to see to believe. Thank You

*What does my parish represent or stand for within the local community?*

#### **Robert Siliciano**

The Parish of Corpus Christi represents hope in our community. In many different ways, our parish reaches out into the community to help others in need. These acts of kindness and helpfulness spread a sense of hope and optimism into people of the community. Every month, our Parish goes to the Dorothy Day center to provide dinner to the homeless. This act of kindness helps show the community that people will help and care about each other. When I first went there I was surprised how many people were there and how poor they were. This showed me the need to volunteer and how important this help is to others. Caring for others is a key value of Catholicism and is very important to me.

The Parish also spreads hope in the community through many

donations. Donations to the local food shelf help support those in need and give them strength and hope. Donations like school supplies and Easter baskets help children and spread joy.

The church is also a source of hope to communities in other places. The church donates to many projects that help other communities like the H2O project and Super Bowl Sunday. There are many other ways that the Parish helps, shows care for, and spreads hope to many people. I feel good when I know that the Parish and I are helping others in other places. Throughout my Confirmation journey this year, I have been involved in many of the good workings of the church, and this is how I see the Holy Spirit working in our parish today.

*What has been an important spiritual experience in my life?*

## **Claire Meints**

There is one person in my life who has definitely had a spiritual impact on me. He's my grandpa, and at 80 years old he is the most spiritual person I know. My grandpa never misses church on Sunday, and has always been active volunteering on church committees. He has talked to me many times over the years about the importance of being a good Christian, and has been a wonderful role model for me in my Catholic faith.

When my grandpa was 76, he went through a life-changing experience that still causes him daily struggles. It has been difficult for our whole family, but it has strengthened his faith along with mine.

It was an open-heart quadruple bypass surgery that changed all of our lives. My grandfather had the surgery in June of 2003. After three hours of waiting and many prayers and tears, we found out the surgery was successful. The Sunday after his surgery he asked, "When can I go to church?" That showed me how devoted he is to living according to God's plan.

My grandfather's recovery was definitely not an easy one. A year later his incision had still not healed.

He went back into the hospital and they determined he had MRSA, a staph infection that can be life threatening. Even though my grandfather had to endure daily hospital visits for a month to get intravenous antibiotics, he never complained and always kept his faith.

A year ago my grandpa found out he needed a pacemaker. The procedure went fine, and he was released two days later. But sure enough, another staph infection came back to haunt us. His first pacemaker had to be removed, and they had to put in another one.

This was a very difficult time for my grandfather, and sometimes I cried myself to sleep at night wondering why this was all happening to a man who had such great faith. Six days later he was well enough to go home.

I have learned so much through these experiences with my grandpa. Not only have I grown closer to him, but it has also made me realize how blessed I am to have a grandfather who has such a strong faith in God. It has made me appreciate my own health as well. Through all of these difficulties, my grandpa has truly shown our family what God's mission is for us, which is to believe in his teachings and share our faith with others. A favorite poem of mine called "Footprints in the Sand" summarizes my faith in God. It says, "You promised me Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life there has only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?" The Lord replied, "The times when you have seen only one set of footprints in the sand, is when I carried you."

## **Marissa Martin**

Good morning! I am Marissa Martin. After much thought, I concluded that a very important spiritual time in my life was when my Grandpa was dying of cancer. A lot of times, it is easier to see God working in our lives when things are going well. If I am happy, have many friends, and have good things going on in my life, then it is difficult to argue that God is not present. Along with this, it is very easy to complain to God and throw our worries and frustrations at Him when we are going through some tough times at school or with our friends. Although during these times we are praying to Him, we fail to see His plan in our lives and many times convince ourselves that a God would never make us go through bad experiences. My family and I were very lucky in the fact that my Grandpa's death was not a surprise or something we had not been expecting. The last few times I visited my Grandpa were probably the times in my life that I felt the closest to God. Through the experience of my Grandpa's death, I learned how important it is to trust God's plan from the beginning. It is not worth it to waste time convincing yourself that you know better than God because in the long run, you never end up being right. God has the grand scheme of things and they always end up being the best for everyone in the situation. Through my Grandpa's death, I learned more about myself, my Grandpa, and God than through anything else. God was there for me all throughout this tough time. Let me tell you, He does not forget you or anyone else, especially in your time of need. God took my Grandpa out of his misery and that gave me full trust in Him. The most amazing time was near the end when my Grandpa told all of us: "They're coming for me." God and His angels were reaching out for Grandpa, and once all of our family had been able to say goodbye, they called him home. This is when I

realized that when I was sitting in n the nursing home holding my Grandpa's hand those last few days, I was really holding the hand of God. He was sitting there with me, with strength and courage, guiding me through. I feel so fortunate today to have been able to go through this experience because it is something I will never forget and by going through it, I realized that I am not alone. When I was walking out of the nursing home for the last time, after just saying my final goodbyes to my Grandpa, I felt inconsolable, as if only a heartless God could take my Grandpa away. However, this is when I looked up at the wall and saw a prayer that gave me all the strength and love I could ever need. The prayer read: Be glad that your life has been full and complete, Be glad that you've tested the bitter and sweet, Be glad that you've walked in sunshine and rain, Be glad that you've felt both pleasure and pain, Be glad for the comfort that you've found in prayer... Be glad for God's blessings, His love and His care.

This prayer was all I needed. I knew God was holding me and would be there as long as I needed him.

*In what person or situation do I especially see the Holy Spirit working in the world?*

### **Danny Heck**

One person in my life that I especially see the Holy Spirit working in is my Mom, Julie Heck. I see the Holy Spirit in her because she was diagnosed with Breast Cancer. She went through a bunch of tests and just recently surgery. Through all of this she has had an unbelievable amount of courage and has always remained positive. From the beginning she has said, "This is God's plan for me and while I don't know why he has chosen it for me I accept it with a smile." She believes that our entire family will become better people because of this. Even a few days after her surgery she was able to make it to my hockey game. I have been taking care of her along with my Dad and my brother, Billy. While going through this it has amazingly increased my faith with hopefully more to come. I started to pray more and more every day. I believe God has answered my prayers and is waiting to answer my prayers in the future and always be with my Mom in her time of need.

### **John Weber**

Hi! I'm John Weber, and when asked the question, "In what person or situation do I see the Holy Spirit working in the world?" the first person that came to mind was my Great Grandma Aggie. I think that because she lives like Christ would want her to and spreads the Holy Spirit to everyone she meets by her actions and positive attitude. I see the Holy Spirit working through her because she is willing to put others before herself and never complains about doing it. But most of all I admire her because

she is a fantastic multi talented individual who uses her talents to help others.

One of the main reasons I see the Holy Spirit working through her is she puts others before herself. Two years ago she had a heart attack while she was volunteering at the nursing home. She made sure that all of the senior citizens in the nursing home made it to mass before she brought herself to the hospital. Once at the hospital coming out of surgery she insisted that she shared her food with my dad because he had rushed straight from work and had not eaten lunch that day. She always serves others just as Jesus did.

In many ways I admire my Great Grandma. I think that she is a great role model for all of us of how Jesus Christ would want us to live.

## **Jake Wild Crea**

Hello I am Jake Wild Crea and I want to share the greatest part of my life with you. When my older sister Maddie was born, the doctors said there was no chance of survival. My parents took her home to be with her for the last minutes of her life. 20 wonderful years later my sister is sitting here listening to me misuse grammar and mispronounce words. The moment my sister was born she showed faith. The first thing she did in life was prove the doctors wrong. Some people may say the reason she is so optimistic and happy is because she doesn't know any better, but I guarantee there are thousands of things she knows that no one here could match.

Maddie's positively and great spirits have brought her far in life, but three years ago she was challenged again. My family was at my sister Claire's and I had a piano recital here at church when Maddie had her first seizure. To this day it has been the scariest moment in my life. Several painful minutes later the ambulance showed up and took the most generous and caring person I know to the hospital.

The next day when I get home from school my sister is sitting on the couch watching TV She is happy as ever and jumps right up to greet me. The first thing she said to me was, "Hey Jake, guess what? I got to miss school today!" When she said that I knew she was just fine and that she always would be. Since then Maddie has been diagnosed with a seizure disorder. I remember asking my mom "Why do these things always happen to Maddie?" My mom's answer was completely honest. She said "Maddie has experienced a lot of adversity, but she has overcome it all as well. This is just another step in her journey." I thought good answer but I still don't know, WHY? The only good I found was missing my piano recital.

Over the past three years I still haven't found a good answer to that question. But I do know why it happened in this church at that time. For whatever reason God pick Maddie for this task, and there is no denying that. But he didn't say good lucky see ya later when he did. It is no coincidence that God choose to have us to find out in his house. It is no coincidence that we found out in the place my sister goes every Sunday to talk to old friends and meet new ones. He was with Maddie when she was suffering, she was with my parents whiled they were helping her and he was with me when my sister and I sat in the pew right in front of the piano crying and praying for my sisters life. And he is with us today as we take the next step in our

journey of faith. God did not abandon us when we needed him then and I know he will not leave me. Thank you.

## *What do I see as a major challenge facing young Catholics today?*

### **Jimmy Francomb**

Hi, I'm Jimmy Francomb. And I would like to say that the biggest challenge facing young Catholics is finding time for Christ. Whether it is sports, academics, a job or something else; there will always be obstacles in finding time for Christ.

Personally, I am involved in at least one sport a season with at least a couple of hours of practice a day. And on top of that, I have an hour or two of homework a night. That leaves me just enough time to eat and get to bed.

So life is busy enough without making time for God. But creating a personal relationship with God is a very important part of a young Catholic's life. I believe that there is a simple solution to this problem. Whenever you are alone, whether it be getting ready in the morning, on the ride to school, running up the stairs to a class, waiting your turn on the practice field or laying in bed trying to go to sleep, just pray and talk to God. You can tell Him about your day, ask for help or say thank you for something. All of those little moments will add up and it will be easier to develop a personal relationship with God.

### **Derrick Mugwaneza**

A major challenge facing young Catholics today is overcoming the constant distractions in their pop culture driven lives to live their faith. At this age, many young people find the subjects of faith and spirituality to be abstract, difficult to grasp, and not quite fitting their lifestyles.

Faith and spirituality are not top of mind for most young people. They'd rather hang out with friends doing all the "fun" stuff that young people like doing. They want to be "cool" and speaking about faith may not appear that way. The lure of online social networks, texting, video games, TV, and sports is much stronger and because of it, many young people struggle to make time for faith-based and spiritual activities.

A complicating factor is that some aspects of religion and spirituality can be abstract and difficult for young people to relate to their daily lives. Since they are still growing emotionally and spiritually, they may not fully understand what is expected of them as Catholics. When this happens, they are not strongly drawn to such activities as going to church, praying, or volunteering. Indeed, they may find these kinds of activities to be like chores, something they have to do because they are told to.

In addition, the pressure and the desire to fit in among their peers can be an obstacle to living the faith among young Catholics. If the group they are involved with is engaged in

activities that are not in line with Christian faith, the temptations are so many and temperance may not be strong. It becomes easy to act contrary to God's will. However, this behavior of young people to want to stick together can also be an asset to promote faith. It all depends on the nature of the group they are drawn to.

In summary, pop culture can be a huge obstacle to living the faith for young Catholics. The good news is that not everything about pop culture lures you into bad habits and there are things that can be done to overcome the challenge. For example, getting young people involved in activities that help them grow spiritually like serving at the Dorothy Day Center, participating in Give and Grin or other volunteering activities. Activities like these give them a glance at life from a different perspective. Also, making time for family activities is important, as they represent opportunities for teachable moments.

Finally, parental guidance is necessary to make sure young people develop temperance and achieve a balance between entertainment and spirituality.

## **Tim Stenlund**

Hello, my name is Tim Stenlund.

"I have no time!" is a popular excuse for teenagers. People often say that the major problem facing young Catholics today is a lack of time to pray. I believe that a lack of initiative is the main issue.

At times when I think about praying I often convince myself that "this can wait." I rationalize this by saying "I'm tired" and put prayer off until the next day. The next day rolls along and again this happens. Other people struggle with this too. While chatting with a friend and he expressed similar thoughts saying, "What I'm doing right now is only happening right now. Prayer can wait." Since joining Confirmation I have seen that I really should pray more. By putting prayer off I am putting Jesus off. It is saying that Jesus is not first in my life as he should be but rather that my activities are. It says that I really don't care. I can read for hours but I just can't handle a few minutes of prayer. I have started to pray at night before I go to sleep.

I now try harder to put Jesus first but still don't always succeed. The trick is to just pray. Don't make excuses. Bring everything before God. As it says in James 5, 13 "Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praise." So don't convince yourself otherwise; pray.