



SAINT PATRICK HIGH SCHOOL

Dear Saint Patrick,

When I first started at Saint Patrick High School, I was completely unsure of what to expect. All I could draw from were the various sentiments expressed by those who were older than me. Faculty and students alike would parrot one line that I particularly remember: make the most out of high school, and get started early; these four years go by in a flash. Perhaps this was my experience all the more due to COVID interrupting the entirety of my freshman year. Because of COVID, my freshman year did not look anything like I thought it would. It was not until I physically sat in class my sophomore year that I began to experience Saint Patrick first hand. Admittedly, for a while, I did not involve myself in any activities at school. My thought process was closed-minded and sought to only satisfy my academic requirements. This mindset that I held changed in the middle of my junior year when I volunteered at the funeral of Brother Konrad Diebold. Working the registry, I witnessed first hand each and every individual who came to pay their respects to the late Brother. With each and every individual, I realized that Saint Patrick High School, through such magnanimous examples as the late Brother Konrad Diebold, have left an indelible mark on the earth through their lives. Even in death, Brother Konrad showed me the value of living a great life, and from then onward, I wanted to do the same. I involved myself more and more in band and service, wanting to make some sort of impact in a way that mimicked Brother Diebold, even if microscopic by comparison.

One of the very first things that you hear about Saint Patrick is the word “brotherhood”. It is a word inscribed both on the physical walls and our hearts as Shamrocks. **“Brotherhood” is not just a word thrown around, but also a tangible essence. You can feel it in the air or in your veins.** Brotherhood is the impetus of the indomitable Shamrock spirit. I witnessed this in its purest form on a handful of occasions, but one that sticks out to me the most would be the Kairos retreat. This retreat, though mentally draining, was the pinnacle of my tenure at Saint Patrick. During my time on Kairos, I connected with my peers in a way that was deeper than anything I had experienced before or after Kairos. There was no such concept as race, religion, or color, but rather a completely raw look at ourselves in the light of God. There is no simple way to describe the flurry of emotions I underwent, but I knew that we were together; all of us, regardless of who we were—regardless of whether or not we even knew each other—all of us sat in the same boat, with the same goal, undergoing the same trial together. Is it any surprise that I met my greatest friend on Kairos? It shouldn’t be, and that is why Kairos is the embodiment of brotherhood. It is the purest form of what you are told so much about throughout your high school years.

Being at Saint Patrick has equipped me with values that have prepared me for life. Being in the band, I was surrounded by talented individuals who put immense amounts of time and effort into what they did, refining themselves through practice day in and day out. Learning from this example, I realized the value of hard work and collaboration. I learned just how much it meant to continually improve and work with other people to achieve a common goal. But beyond the band, the service hours that I did taught me to appreciate my community and to give myself freely to those who could use my help. I learned to help my community and be selfless. I am

thankful for the opportunities that were provided to me by Saint Patrick to go out and be Christ-like through service. I have been given a taste of what it means to help others and be my brother's keeper, and this little taste has inspired me to delve deeper into service in college.

One example that stands out to me is when I was serving at a nearby food pantry. During my time there, I realized that there were people who only spoke their native language, be it Spanish or Polish. Although I only speak English and Spanish, another volunteer luckily spoke Polish. These interactions taught me the value of the language skills I had been learning at St. Pat's. They taught me just how many more people I could interact with simply by speaking another language. Going into college, into the workforce, and into the rest of my life, I will carry and improve my language and communication skills in both languages so that hopefully I can reach many more people. I have been given a unique opportunity for which I am forever grateful. I have the entire World Languages department to thank, as the teachers within it have guided me on the right path. I would not be where I am today without their aid.

If I could see myself four years ago, it would be like looking at a completely different person. Before my time at Saint Pat's, I was just a kid. I was immature, knew little about life, and even though I still have much to learn moving forward, I can say for sure that my high school years have been extremely formative for me as a person. Four years ago I saw no need for things like camaraderie or discipline. Nowadays I look back on that mindset I had and I realize just how foolish I really was. As aforementioned, the death of Brother Konrad Diebold played a substantial role in converting me from a distant, aloof boy to a closely-involved and trying young man. I feel as though now I have legitimate aspirations of attaining a good standing in life in

terms of finding a good job, becoming a father, and dying an honorable death when all is said and done.

In this letter, I have attempted to cover my experience in a concise manner. I suppose such an undertaking is destined to fall short, however, because it is my legitimate belief that even with my access to over 750,000 words in the English lexicon, I am not capable of using diction strong enough to completely and accurately describe what these past four years have meant to me, and the gratitude that I give to my parents, to my teachers, and to God, for making the sacrifice to set me in the situation I find myself now. Go Shamrocks!

With Gratitude,

Cyrus Rios '24