



SAINT PATRICK HIGH SCHOOL

Dear Saint Patrick,

I am forever grateful that you took me in with open arms. I've made countless memories at Belmont and Austin. I came to Saint Patrick High School for the soccer program, but as the years went on, I started to see why so many choose to attend.

I was ecstatic when I got my acceptance letter because I was paving a different path for myself by being the first in my family to attend a Catholic institution. In addition, I was fortunate enough to receive a phone call from Mr. Baffico, former principal, to be selected as one of 3 scholars in my grade (12 in total,) to be a part of the Haerther Scholarship program. The program gave me the financial help that I needed to get the true high school experience. At that point, it seemed the hard part was out of the way. Well, I thought it was. I remember telling myself on the first day of school to cherish every moment I had at this school because (*I'm not joking when I say this*) High School really does fly by.

High School has brought me closer to my faith in many ways. I'll never forget the day Mr. Raho told me that my sophomore and junior years will be the hardest years I'll ever go through because I'll experience change like never before. And he wasn't talking about the ACT, class projects, or deciding between career choices, but about life itself. We're all human and experience detrimental moments that change us forever. Mr. Raho was the first person that I was able to trust and believe. He was there for me in my darkest moments. He taught me to never be afraid to show emotion. All I ever wanted was someone to sit with me and let me talk.

Tradition defined, is the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation. Everyone understands what tradition means, but at the same time, tradition is changing. My graduating class was able to learn and teach fellow Shamrocks different values that they can use for the rest of their lives. Tradition at Saint Patrick High School varies from the beef Thursdays to Kairos year after year. Kairos is a graduation requirement, and the best tradition at St. Pats in my opinion. Kairos allows each

person to be heard, just like Mr. Raho allowed me to do. Every person who wears a Shamrock badge across their heart in the hallways has the ability to start tradition. It can be carried outside of school just like the brotherhood.

I always thought that brotherhood was a cheesy saying that was preached at the heart of the green and gold. Soon enough, I was making friends that will last a lifetime without even knowing it. I involved myself in soccer, and while I was nowhere near as good as my teammates, I wanted to be involved in something. As I kept playing, the workouts didn't get easier to run over the years, but I started noticing that I built bonds that helped me get through tough times. I would play video games with my friends after school. Weeks would go on, and we would be hanging out. Months go by and we're attending each other's birthday parties. 4 years went by and soon I'll be walking with my brothers into the Holy Name Cathedral to celebrate all the adversity and accomplishments we endured together. As lonely as I felt, I never was alone. My boys did everything possible to make me attend as many soccer tournaments as possible, school dances, ACT prep, and most importantly push me out of my shell.

Art taught me to keep moving forward if I make mistakes. Mrs. Blatchley was more than just a teacher for me. She showed me how to make beautiful art while being happy. She showed me that art is present in my life. She showed me how to communicate with a pencil, brush, and a pastel on a blank canvas. I always looked forward to stepping into her class. She greeted me with a smile that would light up the room, and talk to me about how my day went. Out of the three years I spent with her, my favorite was my last because we spent a lot of time creating an art mural that is currently displayed off of the main lobby. At the time, I was a junior and three seniors were also in the class. In an advanced studio class of just four guys, we had so much fun getting our hands marked up by the paint and truly felt confident in our abilities. That class was more than just making art. We would talk about what our "promposals" would look like or about making plans ten years from now to celebrate our friendship. Mrs. Blatchley is an amazing teacher who truly pulled the best out of me. Although she doesn't teach at Saint Pat's anymore, she made me feel confident in my strengths and even better about my flaws.

Lastly, but not least, is Ms. Lai. My Chinese teacher put me through the hardest curriculum of all time. Learning Chinese isn't hard, but remembering 300 Chinese characters with the specific tone marks and its respective meaning was just a tiny bit harder. She taught me that if you are given a task that's hard and it progressively gets harder, to push through it and set high standards for myself. We often neglect

what we're capable of doing because we think many tasks are impossible, when in reality, anything can be accomplished. She sparked a "fire" in me to strive for straight A's, and I have done so many times.

After four hardworking years spent at Saint Pat's, I decided to major in psychology. At first, I thought architecture was my calling, but Mr. Smailis' psychology class intrigued me like no other. I want to be a therapist, or work at a retreat center. Whether it was the faculty/administration, my friends, Patrick (school therapy dog), or even feeling at peace during mass, I truly feel that Saint Patrick turned my life around. They assured me that I didn't need to live a life that made me feel I had to set certain expectations for others. Saint Patrick always put US first, they put me first.

I'll be saddened because another chapter in my life must come to an end. All the friends, all the teachers, all the tribulations, everything that I encountered throughout my high school journey has been amazing. Saint Pat's has changed my life, shown me core values, and formed me to become a better son, better student, and overall, better human. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for everything. And saying thank you still is not sufficient to demonstrate my gratitude.

Signing Out,

Oracio Vega '23