

Joseph Pastina
"Home"

My perception of Saint Xavier High School as an eighth grader was limited. Sure, I had heard high praise about the school, and yes, I would be enrolling as a freshman there the following year, but wasn't it just another school? Wasn't it just another four years of learning and hoping to meet a few new friends along the way? If only I could go back and talk to my fourteen year-old-self. If only I could somehow manage to formulate an explanation of why Saint Xavier would be more than just a school. If only I could have known how it would change my life and sculpt a mature man from a boy. If only.

I would soon find out for myself. When I arrived at St. X, my original perception of it as merely "a school" quickly changed. Through orientation and the first few weeks of classes, I realized immediately that St. X was both unique and extraordinary. As freshmen, we were a melting pot of intimidated boys depending on the leadership of the older students around us and upon our teachers' guidance. These leaders did not fail us. The seniors showed heartfelt pride for their school all of the time. They were role models. My teachers were not just individuals who are paid to teach. They wanted to be there. They had passion and desire to forge us into great men. They wanted not only to help us succeed in the classroom but also to teach us life-lessons that we'd carry forever. These teachers were my best friends. There were many times where I'd go up to a teacher's classroom for general help about anything, to talk about sports, or just to catch up. The entire faculty would ALWAYS go out of their way to help just one young man. Over the course of my four years at St. X, I was fortunate enough to be in the classrooms of thirty-five different teachers. Of those thirty-five, twenty-one of them were alumni. This is pride personified. These great men have dedicated themselves to teach the generation after them and to help them to understand why St. X is more than just a school.

As my years at St. X passed, I grew alongside the school and my classmates. Together, we established our identity. We were no longer students; we were St. X students. We all knew from the first day of freshman year, we were not on this journey alone. We were, as the signs around school proclaimed, a band of brothers. Whether there was a play, a sporting event, an art show, or a quick recall match, there was always overwhelming support. No, we didn't just go to these events because our friends were going. It was beyond that. The seed of pride planted within us the first moment we walked past "the circle" and through the cafeteria doors was beginning to sprout. We supported each other because we cared about each other. I could see myself changing before my own eyes; however, the biggest change was yet to come.

Junior year was monumental in every way. It was arguably the most important academic year, and college talk began to spawn. With stress building up, I thought it would be wise to go on the September Christian Awakening Retreat. I did not know much about this retreat, and, being the first slot of the year, we were the "guinea pig" group. On this retreat, I found out what St. X truly was about. I met and bonded with a variety of young men, all of whom had different backgrounds and a different story to tell. I fell in love with my brothers, but that is not even what made this retreat so special. I learned then that I would have these brothers for life. St. Xavier High School is not a four-year high school; Saint Xavier High School is the first step into adulthood, and it is a lifelong experience where adolescents are taught Christ's ideals and how to

become a man. These lessons stick with us forever. Saint Xavier High School is not just a school; it is our home.

As I prepare to graduate, I am not fully leaving St. X behind. The ideals instilled in me will last forever, and I know I have a multitude of brothers who will always be there for me. This is not exclusive to my graduating class but is instead worldwide. We are an everlasting community. On several occasions across the United States, an alumni has spotted me sporting my St. X attire, and said, "You go to the best school in the country." I am proud to say I am a St. X student, and I will always be a part of the St. Xavier family. Whether it be exploring the streets of China with forty of my brothers, camping in the wilderness, or gathering up a team of young men to help weatherize homes in the winter, we always feel united. I will always be a part of the brotherhood, and I will continue the mission of the Xaverian brothers as long as I live. So, if I had a chance to talk to my eight-grade-self, I would tell him this: there is nothing like St. Xavier High School, and there is no place like home.