

My journey to Saint X was on a road long and unpredictable. In the summer of 2011, my mother, Donna Cambron, was diagnosed with cancer. She had successfully fought the disease a decade earlier, and I had the opportunity to see her take it on again with more poise and bravery than ever could have been expected.

Fast forward one year to the summer of 2012: I had graduated the 8th grade, my sisters were both home from college, and my father had worked hard to scramble as much support—spiritual and otherwise—for my mother from our friends and family. It was so much, but it wasn't enough. My mother passed away on a sunny day in July.

Orientation came, and I was in denial, for lack of a better word. Having come from a school in Indiana, I knew hardly anyone at Saint X besides my father, who taught and teaches physics there. I did my best to push her out of my head, to let my positive disposition take control. I was anything but excited; I was shy and scared.

Despite my worries, I discovered one of the true staples of the Saint X experience: the teachers. My discovery was twofold; the first half was the respect and genuine care that I received from every one of my teachers each day. I am amazed to think that they have imparted to me only some of their seemingly infinite knowledge of language, philosophy, and mathematics. They continue to guide me toward unique perspectives, uncover interests which I never knew I had, and instill in me lessons that will forever transcend the classroom experience. The second half was my dad, a teacher in a different sense entirely. He showed me more as a father than I ever knew was possible. He molded me from the shy freshman into the young man, not afraid to be himself. He taught me how to healthily combine mourning the loss of my mother, his wife, and simultaneously celebrate her life. He taught me how much my mother had touched his life and those of my sisters and me. Without knowing it, he taught me to see her in others.

Her image, throughout my time at Saint X, has caught my eye in places that I could have never predicted. I saw her through a vital component in my high school, the service work. My adamantly Catholic mother would not have had me experience my religion in any other way; I have seen unparalleled hardship and kindness during my time for Project Warm, at the Abbey of Gethsemani, and at the Exit Zero Homeless Shelter. These experiences not only made me much more deeply grateful for everything I have, but also moved me to want to give back for the rest of my life.

Giving one's whole self occurs during another key cog on the Saint X avenue: retreats. Through what should be considered the cornerstone of my school, the Christian Awakening Retreat, I crossed paths with students that I never would have met through class, sports, or outside of school. On this mental and emotional rollercoaster during my junior year, I received a letter from my mother. She and my father's indescribably special foresight inside of that envelope helped me encounter real closure for that part of my life.

My senior year finds me with new family members and new friends, along with staid relationships that have not faded but have grown stronger. I recently spoke to a father of a friend that described Saint X as a place that will push you to failure, in the best possible way. This school has given me the most challenging, charging, and downright difficult trials, emotionally and intellectually, of my existence. There are no words for the humble pride and thankfulness with which I will graduate and salute a new chapter in life.

—Christian D. Cambron