

Cooper Marchal

## The Bigger Picture

The decision to attend Saint Xavier High School was easy; my brother was then enrolled, my parents supported it fully, and more importantly all my friends were going. I thought I knew what I was getting into. I knew I would have a great high school experience with my career as an up-and-coming runner for the track team, the rigorous academics that St. X is known for, and my ever growing social life. But, the most significant reverberation that will carry me far beyond the walls of St. X was the change in my adolescent faith which bore into me with unexpected strength.

Faith is not easy for any teenager to talk about nor does anyone really want to talk about it. My grade school understanding of God and my role as a Catholic seemed as far away from me as the heavens themselves. I believed I was a good person, but following the strict dogma of the Catholic faith seemed futile. My faith was built upon objective understandings of the Church's teachings without ever coming to know these truths firsthand in my heart. This faith was built upon stilts and was easily cut down at the first rumblings of hardship. You hear a lot of people ask "Why me?" but for me I did not look to God because I didn't know where to look. Prayers felt like words spoken to a void with only my echo as a response.

Only through the facilitation of St. X did I come to a penetrating faith that connected with me. This awakening of faith came through theology classes that challenged me intellectually and pushed me spiritually, my intimate experiences of Christian Awakening Retreat, and just the everyday interactions with fellow students and teachers. Over my years, teachers have become more than mere instructors. The students of St. X became more than just passing faces in the hallway. I began to recognize the divine in the everyday. I came to know God as more than a supreme being, but rather a dynamic presence that is inescapable yet undefinable.

My faith is still young and flawed; I will suffer things that will rattle my faith, but armed with my understanding of the bigger picture, I tread without fear. With more experiences of this truly wonderful life, my faith will die and be reborn over and over with new understandings and insights. Accepting this imperfection and allowing myself to question allows my faith to mature as I mature. Learning to walk through this life with kindness in my heart, integrity in my faith, and the humility to lean on it has come from my unforgettable time at St. Xavier.