



## **Learn. Serve. Lead. Succeed.**

Catholic Schools Week  
January 26 – February 1, 2020

### **Catholic Schools Essay Contest**

#### **Second Place**

**by Jennifer Bukowski – Sophomore**

*Carmel Catholic High School, Mundelein, Ill.*

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit” (John 15:5). If there is one thing that my Catholic education has taught me it is that all things are possible with God and you need God in order to do all things. I have been attending a Catholic school since I was three years old, and my Catholic education is something that I hold very near and dear to my heart. A strong Catholic education has allowed me to learn, serve, lead, and succeed.

I have learned many things during my time as a student in Catholic schools. Although I received a great education in areas such as math and science, what I learned in those classes is nowhere near as important as what I learned about myself and my faith. It was in a Catholic school that I learned about Jesus’s miracles and how to pray the Creed. It was where I prepared for my First Holy Communion and joined my classmates in prayer. I learned what it meant to be Catholic and I learned how to love God. I specifically remember one day in fourth grade when our teacher told the class that Jesus is our friend. I also recall singing a song called “Footprints.” This song said how God would always be by our side and carry us when we can no longer walk. Catholic school is where I learned many things about my faith.

I learned what it means to truly serve others during my Catholic education. We had many drives at my Catholic Parish School to help the community in need. One food drive in particular in eighth grade was a huge success. The two eighth grade homerooms decided to have a competition to see who could bring in the most food, and both classes took this very seriously. We ended up bringing in many non-perishable food items for our parish's food pantry. However, I also learned that I can serve others simply with kind words. I learned this through the friends I have made at Catholic school. Whenever I feel down, my friends are always there with smiles, kind words, and hugs. I learned how to serve others emotionally from them. I learned how to serve others during my time attending a Catholic school.

Catholic education has given me the tools to become the leader I am today. As a young girl, I was extremely shy and timid. I was scared of talking with other people and standing up for myself, but as time went on, I began to gain confidence. I learned that God had given me gifts, and I was to share those gifts with those around me. One of the gifts that God has blessed me with is the gift of being a good listener. By listening to others, I am able to see different perspectives of the same situation and help lead people toward a solution. He has also given me the wonderful gift of five younger siblings, which has helped me build my leadership skills and responsibility. Catholic education has given me the building blocks to lead.

I have learned what it means to truly succeed due to my Catholic education. I used to wonder what success truly was. Was it wealth? Fame? Power? It wasn't until after praying during my Catholic education that I began to realize what success was. True success was happiness. People who are happy are successful, and people who follow God are happy. Perhaps this is not the conventional definition of success, but we are successful when we live our lives in the name of the Lord. During my time at Catholic School I learned that success can only be reached by following God.

Throughout my years at Catholic school I have learned how to learn, serve, lead, and succeed. I am so grateful for all the kind people who have helped me in my faith formation and for the amazing opportunities that I have been given to deepen my relationship with God. For God is the vine, and we are the branches, as all that we do stems from Him.