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Catholic Schools Week
January 26 – February 1, 2020

Catholic Schools Essay Contest

First Place

by Jeremy Kamman – Senior

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Metamorphosis: Breaking Out of My Shell

Looking through my elementary school yearbooks a while ago, I was startled with how much I have grown up. I used to attend Sarah Adams Elementary School in Lake Zurich up until fifth grade when I transferred to Saint Francis de Sales School, also in Lake Zurich. Just as you don't see the grass grow over a short period of time, look back after a longer period of time and the growth will be pronounced; similarly, I decided to flip through my yearbooks to go on a trip down memory lane. I started with my Carmel yearbooks, looking back on Junior year, then Freshman year, all the way back to the earliest grade that I had records from. Honestly, I didn't recognize myself, not just physically, but I didn't recognize that person anymore.

I was a mischievous child and took my blessings for granted. My interests were all self-directed and my talents were all neglected. It was no secret that I was different. My test scores were exceptionally high, but my grades did not reflect that. The only concern that I had was fitting in and making sure that I was popular. God blessed me with a curious mind and rare creativity, and I repaid him by not doing my homework or trying to dull my shine as to not stand out.

The transition to a Catholic school was like swimming in saltwater versus freshwater; just like salt water, if I wasn't careful, I would fall behind with my homework and my grades feel a sting. It rang like an alarm clock and it sure gave me a reality check. The curriculum was engaging and challenging, the teachers were full of energy and life, which is far more helpful than those at my previous school. It was at Saint Francis that I discovered my love for science. My teachers humored my obsessions with my history teacher allowing me to write creative historical essays and my science teacher allowing me to sing the periodic table to the class and present a 30-minute long science project. I learned to love learning. I still was self-absorbed and cocky, but I actually utilized my talents and stopped trying to hide my shine.

If Saint Francis was the cocoon, Carmel Catholic High School was the metamorphosis. The first criticism that I had about Carmel was the service hour requirement. I was still self-centered and cocky, so I didn't need to help others because they weren't worth my time (that was my mindset at least). It's funny how life turns out. Now, as a senior, I have to ask admissions representatives from colleges where I could do community service. Ironically, the community service that I resented so much before became such an integral part of my life that I can't imagine *not* volunteering. I love helping others now; my friends and I even have "service parties" where we will volunteer together at places such as Bernie's Book Bank (my friend even has her birthday party there). My Catholic education not only opened my eyes to those around me, but it inspired me to take a more active role in my community. Honestly, I don't know how it happened, but I am the captain of four academic teams at Carmel and am on the board of our math honor society. I never intended to be a leader in any of them, I only did them because I enjoyed them; when I was chosen as a leader, I still acted like a member, I am a servant leader to my community. The way I see it is, I do what my peers want, and I won't make them do anything that I wouldn't want to do myself. I have been a large advocate for our new foreign exchange students, helping them get into more advanced classes, and I even spent several months working to induct them into our honor society. My Catholic education did not give me anything that I did not already have, but I enabled me to use my talents, which was what allowed me to grow and develop as a person. I am looking forward to a bright future of helping others and serving the citizens of the world.