



Catholic Schools Week | January 31 – February 6, 2021

First Place Essay Contest

by Isabel Tapia – Senior

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Faith, Excellence, and Service.

Let me start off by saying, that before coming to a Catholic School, I don't believe I had the strongest faith. I was confident in myself, and only trusted my family for guidance. Catholic School taught me how to read the bible, and pray. However, the moment my baby nephew got sick with Covid-19 last year, I felt lost. I saw how many people died because of the virus, and I never thought the virus would hit so close to me. I reflected a lot, to myself, in my own way. I blamed God for allowing this to happen. I know my cousin and her family practiced safe guidelines, and my baby nephew still got it. He was in pain, and it hurt me. But I thought about faith. And what it meant to have faith, and so I prayed. I prayed every night, hoping he recovered. My emotions were strong, and I never felt closer to God. I had conversations with him, mainly asking why this happened, but also knowing I could always depend on God for comfort. I talked to my cousin, every day, checking in; and we both started saying "God will give him strength". And he did, because he recovered, and

felt better. And I thank God, because I know he gave my baby nephew the strength to push through the pain, and recover.

I practice Excellence by setting goals for myself. It is hard to set goals, but God knows I try my hardest. The one time I remember having given up, was when I moved schools. I felt lost, and I was hard on myself. I felt like I have lost motivation to continue with my studies: the schools I applied to did not want to accept me because I did not meet the required credits. I was disappointed in myself. But thankfully, Our Lady of Tepeyac accepted me into their school. I became a new student, I felt embarrassed, and I felt defeated. But I didn't want to disappoint my parents. I wanted to make them proud. I took it upon myself, to start doing better. I set myself to overcome my studies to succeed. I put more effort in my studies than I did before. And with hard work, I was able to raise my grades and overcame my fears of being the new student. I made new friends, and built confidence in myself.

Being part of a community builds connection to one's roots to their heritage. I live in the heart of Chicago, in the Pilsen community. And I love the culture that has been raised here by immigrant families and small business owners. I know there are many families here who cannot afford a private nanny, or tutor. And something that brings me close to my community is volunteering my service at the Guadalupano Center. There I am a helper to the teacher, forming a connection with the children who will be dropped off there. I didn't see myself loving what I do. These kids look up to me for guidance and for acknowledgment. But they too, have inspired me. They are smart, and full of energy, they keep me on my toes and I know I have become a better person because of them. I hope I have become an influence to them, as they influenced me. And I hope I continue to provide service to the Guadalupano, because I will continue to want to be part of the community that will always show me love and comfort, bringing me closer to my heritage.