

Praise be Jesus, and thanks be to God for each of you! Thanks be to God also for my school, St. Patrick High School in Portland. I've been going there for years now, and there are so many wonderful things I can say about it: small classes, friendly and knowledgeable teachers, phenomenal test scores, fun and competitive sports teams, supportive families, and a familial atmosphere, just to name a few. But the real reason I go to St. Pat's, and why it can be a home for so many others, is the Catholic identity of the school.

I began at St. Pat's, following a decision made by my parents after they had participated in a bible study. During that class, it became clear to them how important a Christian education was. I have some pretty great parents, and I think this is one of the best decisions that they've ever made!

Although I reluctantly agreed to leave my old school and friends, I was given it all back a hundredfold by the immense blessings I received, in addition to school and friends at St. Patrick's. These included weekly school Mass, daily religion class, and my own first Communion. I began to really notice the altar servers at Mass and I became one. My spiritual life shot off like a rocket after that! The experience of assisting in the highest form of prayer and being so close to the eternal sacrifice of Christ is amazing and never ceases to strike me as such. All of this growth was supported and guided by helpful and formative religion classes, morning prayer at school with Scripture, and the wonderful examples of faithful Catholicism that I saw and continue to see today in the St. Patrick High School staff, who helped me and my class receive our Confirmation.

St. Pat's has impacted me deeply, but this is just my own unfinished story. I'm sure there are many other stories of how this school has touched other people's lives. My question is what will your story be? Come visit us, try us out, and see what it's like to go to class in an academically challenging, faith-filled Catholic high school. I believe you'll like what you see because the presence of Jesus and his grace are as plain as can be when you walk the halls. Please pray for our school, and rest assured that I will be praying for you.

Respectfully,
Jeff Davlin
Junior, St. Patrick High School

We came to visit St. Patrick School in May 2014 after feeling unsatisfied with the direction our previous diocese was moving in regards to Catholic schools. Additionally, we had only two more years to figure out where we were going to send our oldest child to high school since our local Catholic school was only K-8 and we saw changes that didn't make the public high school an option. While we understand that a strong Catholic foundation from home and K-8 education should be enough to give our kids the tools they need to stay on high moral ground, we all know that those 4 years of high school are four of the most defining and personally challenging years (usually just behind the four college years) that each of us face.

We could send her to the closest Catholic high school in our diocese 30 miles away but we figured if we were going to go through the trouble and cost, we might as well consider how to get her in a Catholic high school whose highest educational goals mirrored what we wanted for our children... Heaven.

We chose to visit St. Patrick for two reasons: 1) because it was the closest school to our home that was in the Grand Rapids diocese and 2) because when I heard it was a K-12 Catholic school all in one building, I just had to see what that looked and felt like. Many of you are already familiar with how wonderful the Catholic schools in the Grand Rapids diocese are but this was our first glimpse. The scholarships and strong belief in subsidiarity were a huge attraction for us to find a way to get there.

We considered moving but leaving a \$60,000+ salary seemed foolish with 7 children; plus, we were 10 years into a mortgage on our dream home, and owned a business in the area . How could we leave all that financially speaking? We prayed. By December of that year, I felt a change was coming. On New Year's Eve, I didn't make a resolution. Instead, I asked God to solve this problem . Whatever the answer is, I would accept it, I just asked Him to make it clear so I wasn't guessing.

On the Friday before Holy Week, Bob told me he had been laid off as part of a district wide effort. I was so happy that God made the decision and made it so clear! It may be the only time in my life that I got bad news but was so incredibly happy because I could see God's hand in the design. I didn't know how we'd feed our children, where we'd live or where the tuition money would come from but I knew we were supposed to move to Portland so we could send our children to St. Patrick.

How we are feeding our children, what Bob would do for income, and what we would do about our businesses could be three or four more speeches describing how God worked everything out, but I will leave those for another time. You'll remember our original problem was where to send our oldest to high school. In the chaos during that time, we learned we were expecting our 8th baby. Our kids ranged from 8th grade to Kindergarten that year.

Our oldest was a little resentful and only seemed to focus on the changes that she didn't like . But it didn't take long to open her mind to opportunities that she didn't have before: like sports – she got to play volleyball and run track. She found a niche in her old love: singing at Mass and joined the youth ensemble. She started to create relationships with her classmates and has since found a home in leadership roles here that she would never been exposed to in most other schools. She has been able to participate in Holy Day Masses; that would never have happened if she went to a public high school. She has been able to attend stations every Friday during Lent...couldn't have happened if she attended a public school. She has been able to say the rosary, the Divine Chaplet and participate in eucharistic adoration. All as part of her school day, all to learn what she needs most to attain true happiness in this life and heaven in the next.

I'm sure you know Catholic schools have decades of statistics to show the academic excellence taught and achieved and St. Patrick is no different. Maybe it's the teachers, the principal, or even the priest who can be credited ...or maybe it's because these schools are trying to achieve the one thing for your child that no public institution can lay claim to: their soul.

How are we paying for it? Like I said, that's a whole other story. In short, we have eight children, Bob found a new job but his salary is half of what it was, we closed our business in 6 out of 7 locations and opened just one new one closer to our new home, we sold our dream home for far less than we paid and are now living in a small home in Portland... and we couldn't be happier! It doesn't make sense but faith is like that most times.

We don't have to worry about how the daily subjects are aligned with our faith. We don't have to worry about how to get our children to Mass on a Holy Day of Obligation. We also don't worry how we will pay tuition or how our children will get to a school that is far away. If you give his children back to his care and the care of his church, he will see to the little things. We pray you will consider allowing St. Pat's to be the instrument that God uses to provide an education for your child with the robustly Catholic moral teaching and presentation of truth for which your child's heart yearns.

~Jessica White. Parent, St. Patrick School