

There are a significant number of challenges facing me as a Catholic student as I enter my freshman year in college. The greatest of these is the absence of faith in my generation. I come from a large Roman Catholic family. I am the fourth of eight children and we all practice our faith. My siblings and I have all attended catholic grammar school, high school and colleges. My Catholic faith is so important to me. Even though I have attended only catholic learning institutions, I have met so many people who do not have any faith. I anticipate that number will be even greater when I arrive at college. I think the greatest problem I witness with my generation is that people don't believe in sin. They think that we are entitled to do anything that makes us feel good, no matter what. Confession is never thought of because no one believes that their actions are fulfilled.

Another problem facing my generation is the complete disregard for the value of life. I can't believe the arguments that I have with friends who do not see the evil behind abortion. Everyone knows about "w man's rights" but not many realize that we all have a basic right which is the right to life. I have attended the March for Life in Washington each year since I was in third grade. My parish sends a bus filled with parishioners and it has had such an impact on me. Each year I see more and more young people at the march and the number of people in attendance is extraordinary. It gives me so much hope for our future and is such an awesome experience.

When I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade I won the Diocesan "Right to Life" essay contest. My essay was about a friend of the family who suffered a severe medical issue during the pregnancy of her third child.

She was five months pregnant and suffered what was similar to an aneurysm in her brain. All the doctors told her to abort the baby because her life was at risk. A week before this diagnosis, she had a sonogram performed and swore that the baby waved to her. She knew she had to trust that God would take care of everything. Months passed and she lost sight in one eye, had excruciating headaches and was very ill. She couldn't even find a doctor who would treat her and deliver the baby because she was such a high risk. No doctor wanted to get involved. She ended up giving birth to a beautiful baby boy. Her sight returned and everything turned out great. That mom faced a lot of criticism for her choices. People accused her of being selfish and not taking her husband and other children into consideration. She not only had to deal with her own fears but the talk within the community as well. That little boy is my little brother's best friend. They both just made their First Holy Communion last week and I couldn't help but think about how different things would have been if she would have listened to her friends or the doctors instead of God.

There is so much more that needs to be done. Suicide, euthanasia and abortion are very serious issues that confuse so many my age. I tell that story all the time and I'm forever saying, "Only God can give life and only God can take it away".

Drugs, alcohol and promiscuity are other dangers that plague teenagers. We are bombarded with it everywhere we fume. Again, it's that whole concept of "whatever makes you feel good". No one can escape it. Cell phones have had a major impact in this area as well. I can find or get anything I want on my phone. It's immediate and dangerous but the reality is that it's here to stay.

I guess I would have to say the best way to face these challenges is to cling to my faith. Mass and the rosary are the only way to keep my feet on the ground and my head free from the

distractions. Like I mentioned before, I come from a large family. I have thirty-three cousins on my mom's side alone. We meet at different homes each Sunday and pray the rosary as an extended family. My grandparents are still alive and are present at each Sunday rosary. They have been married sixty-two years and have set such an example of faith to all their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. They have certainly been an influence on me and even my choice to become a nurse. I realize that at the ages of eighty-six and eighty-eight they still have full and meaningful lives. When they are ill and enter the hospital we make sure that the doctors and nurses know that they are precious and that they should do everything necessary to keep them alive. \ Thank God it has worked. The Sunday rosary reinforces what my grandparents taught all of us. The homes are filled with lots of love, fun, food and friendship. I know it helps me a great deal and I intended to continue that for the rest of my life. Praying the rosary, attending Mass and remaining close to God will enable me to face the challenges of college and in the years to come.