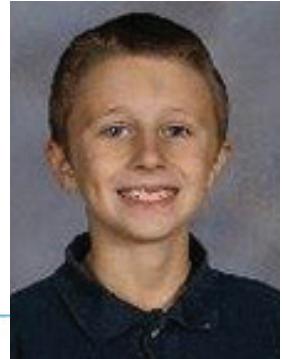




CONNECT. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

MY STORY OF DISCIPLESHIP

by Ryan Coen, 5th Grade Student -
Saint James Catholic School



Stewardship

By: Ryan coen

Stewardship is a very important part of being a Catholic. It is a great way of serving the Lord and showing love towards others. One way I am a good steward is being a greeter at mass and holding the doors for others. I also go to Family Faith Formation to learn more about God outside church and school. I go to the warming shelter to help the homeless too. While there I help serve food and play games with them. Another way I am a good steward is I give 10% of my allowance to church. In the future I hope to become an altar server at school and at church.



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MY STORY OF DISCIPLESHIP

Tony Cecil, Saint James Parishioner

At a young age, Saint James Catholic Church showed me the beauty of belonging to the Body of Christ—that is, the beauty of being Catholic. I grew up right outside of Lebanon Junction, and was brought up in the faith at Saint Benedict Catholic Church and Saint Clare Oratory, two places dear to my heart to this day. When I was a freshman at Bethlehem High School, my dad made the decision for us to move to town. Thankfully, just a few minutes away from our new home was Saint James, and we were quickly able to find a home in this faith community. I was able to learn at a young age this beauty of being Catholic, that for the most part, wherever I go in the world, there is a place where I can join in community and worship God, just as we have been doing for thousands of years.



I have to admit, as a high school student and a new parishioner, I was not involved very much. However, the involvement that I did have helped me grow in many ways. I was involved with the Art and Environment Committee, helping to decorate the church for holidays and feasts. This led me to discovering my creativity and allowing me to grow in that creativity to put it at the service of others. I've grown in my talent, particularly as a photographer, with my photos being used by the Archdiocese, my seminaries, our parish, and others, to aid in their ministries. I also became involved with the Respect Life Committee, since my uncle and aunt are so involved with it, and was able to attend the March for Life in Washington, DC. This led me to establishing a respect life organization at Bethlehem, a group that is still going strong today, and is still taking high school students to Washington, DC for the March for Life each year.

When I entered the seminary, my dad made the decision to move back home to Lebanon Junction, and to reconnect with Saint Benedict, a community he has been a part of for over forty years. This left me with the decision to either stay at Saint James, or to go back to Saint Benedict. While both are home for me, I decided to declare Saint James as my home parish for the Archdiocese, since it is here that my faith grew so much, and since I knew that this would be a vibrant place that I could continue to be involved in, a place I could learn, and a good place to come home to.

Entering the seminary put me in a unique place as a parishioner—while I am a registered and active member of the parish, I have lived in another state for many years, and am only able to even attend Mass at Saint James a few times a year. In terms of Stewardship, the lessons that I learned early on as a parishioner have helped me now that I am away so much. The lesson essentially is what Saint Teresa of Calcutta is so often quoted as saying, “Do small things with great love.” I live nearly two hours away, so there's no way I can be heavily involved at Saint James, but there are small things I can do with great love.

Each week, I log on to our new and improved parish website, and read the bulletin to see what's happening at home. Every morning when the seminary gathers to pray the morning office, I remember our parish in my prayers. In my room at the seminary, in a rather prominent place, I have an icon of our parish's patron, Saint James the Greater, and when I'm in the room, I usually try to keep a candle lit next to it, so that I can be mindful of the need to pray for our parish, and to thank the Lord for the support the parish continues to show me on my journey toward priesthood. When I am fortunate enough to be home, which is usually at Christmas and Easter, I make sure to ask our priests how I can help. Usually, that takes the form of serving big Masses, but other times, it's in other ways. Over this past Christmas break, Father Martin asked me to help out in the parish office, which was a way for me to both be of service to the parish, but to also learn quite a bit as well.

Although I am not able to be home very much, I've figured out ways to get involved—sometimes all I can do is pray, and while it may not seem like much, I know from experience that the Lord uses our prayers to do more than we could imagine. I encourage my fellow parishioners—our faith is much more than an hour on Sunday—look for some way to become further involved in the life of this community—a community which is vibrant with quite a bit happening. Even if it is something small, if it is done with great love and done for the glory of God, amazing things can still happen.



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