

Ciara Coulter

St. Jude School, Class of 2016

Lansdale Catholic High School Valedictorian, Class of 2020

What role do you think St. Jude School played in your life? Preparing you for high school and beyond? St. Jude played a tremendous role in my life so far, and I predict that it will continue to do so throughout the rest of my life. All throughout high school, my teachers would learn of certain students' work ethic and desire to understand and quickly ask, "You are a Jude kid, aren't you?" I would always beam with pride when asked this, for it was to be held in association with such a wonderful place. The faculty of LC is no stranger to the kindness, determination, and intelligence that stems so clearly from St. Jude, and I am sure other high schools can attest to this as well. I myself am grateful for being taught these qualities, but also I am overjoyed that St. Jude's doors continue to send out wonderfully taught and prepared children who surely will make the world a better place. St. Jude gave me such a strong, dual foundation of faith and academic excellence, as it also did for my family, friends, and hopefully, generations to come.

What is your favorite memory of St. Jude School? Why? It is difficult to name just one, as I genuinely enjoyed nearly every day, but upon choosing, I would probably say my eighth grade field trip to New York City. The trip was magnificent. My class was able to go to the "Top of the Rock" and take in the skyline from the heart of the city. For a 13-year-old, that introduces a level of perspective never seen before. All those millions of people milling about in a world that I had only seen a small part of. It also served as a sort of last hoorah for me and my fellow classmates, the ones I had carried with for almost all of my childhood. They were my best friends, given to me by St. Jude, and this trip served as a final acknowledgement to that bond.

What role does your Catholic faith play in your life? Greatly thanks to St. Jude, my Catholic faith has grown steadily over the past few years. It has its ups and downs as every person has; we are human, after all. But with the solid foundation I received at St. Jude, the wealth of theological knowledge and great love for Jesus Christ, I have found my way through it. Since leaving St. Jude, I have participated in several trips with the Catholic Heart Work camp. I also have had the privilege of attending and then leading a Kairos for LC, a Catholic retreat designed for high schoolers. I will also be leading one this summer, safety permitting.

What are some of the challenges you face as a young adult? Being a teenager or young adult nowadays is different than any other era, I would say, which offers very unique challenges. The ones I have most observed are in the indifference and immorality that pervade teen culture today. Kids are exposed to things from all angles at a young age, thanks to the quick-paced, all-encompassing Internet. It does hold its benefits, but to say that it can deeply hurt this rising generation is an understatement. I credit St. Jude for teaching me the resolve and awareness that arm me against these pitfalls. One

challenge that may be more personal to me, though I suspect others feel it too, is the stress of deciding one's life so quickly. We are all told to pick a major, to set our futures in stone at eighteen, which, unsurprisingly, brings on a wave of panic. Someone once said to me, however, that it really is not like that at all. Sure, you will get a degree in one thing, but you never know where you will end up. You have all these years and memories left; do not worry that they will all be spoiled by one wayward decision. Humans have a way of making the most of things.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? People may be surprised to learn that, though I am a chemical engineering major, I love to write. I like reading and writing poetry. At St. Jude, you would rarely find me without a book to read. One day, I hope to write a novel. I love fiction most of all, but I sometimes think about drawing inspiration from my own life. I also love art and fashion, which I am sure stem from my grandmother, Rita.

Anything else you would like to share? Again, I would just like to thank the teachers and staff of St. Jude for giving me such a tremendous education and, truly, a place that I still call home.