

## **Justin Baker**

St. Jude School, Class of 2016

Archbishop Wood 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 gave me the tools I needed to succeed. I got to explore my interests enough at St. Jude so that, come high school, I had some idea of what activities I would like to participate in, and St. Jude prepared me well to succeed academically in my high school classes. One specific skill, which I learned at St. Jude, I highly value and I have practiced all throughout high school, is that of public speaking. What I learned in class, in preparing for the Science Fair, and in the Forensics club has stuck with me, has helped me greatly in all subjects and will help me going forward. I did robotics in high school, among other things, and, consistently, one of the most valuable skills I had was the ability to communicate clearly and confidently to the team and to judges. I have to say that I am definitely grateful to St. Jude, as it certainly prepared me for high school and gave me skills which I will still carry into my studies in college.

***What is your favorite memory of St. Jude School? Why?*** This is an unexpectedly difficult question for me. There were plenty of moments which were definitely up there, but if I had to choose one to call my favorite, I would have to say CYO basketball. It was just a whole lot of fun, no deep reason for why. I'm not a very athletic person, I just enjoy basketball.

***What role does your Catholic faith play in your life?*** My Catholic faith is very important to me; Scripture and prayer have always helped to keep my priorities straight and to inspire me. I cannot really quantify it, but being Catholic has also given me a different perspective compared to some non-Catholic peers. Going to St. Jude and then to a Catholic High School in Archbishop Wood has shown me the communal dedication to service we have as Catholics, and on a smaller scale I think we all aspire to serve in the model of Christ.

***What are some of the challenges you face as a young adult?*** I would say a lot of uncertainty faces me as of right now, going into the world. There have been and continue to be many novel challenges in the world, and, with all these changes coinciding with me really moving into the world, I do not know what to expect. More personally, I need to be more organized.

***What would people be surprised to learn about you?*** Two of my friends and I invented a product to help people in wheelchairs last year, and I own 6 identical kazoo's and only ever carry one with me at a time. Two completely unrelated facts, I know, but hopefully one was mildly surprising.

***Anything else you would like to share?*** Just advice to anyone going into high school: never be afraid to volunteer and never be afraid to talk to people. If you put yourself out there, people will see that. Many good things came my way because I offered to help out. I also found that, if something, anything, interests you, it probably interests other people. Don't hide your passions or your talents.