

2023
Grade 8

In March of this year, while many of my peers were enjoying their Spring Break, I was presented with the largest problem I've encountered in my 13 years of life. I was faced with a life or death scenario where I put my life in the hands of my faith and left it all to God. I, along with my dad, uncle, and a couple of friends, traveled to the Texas coast to enjoy a day of fishing. In preparation for the trip, we checked the weather report, as we normally do, and noticed a cold front would be approaching. Typically, this is not a huge problem; however, we were about to encounter something that only our faith could prepare us for. After fishing for several hours, we finished up and started heading back to shore. As we traveled back to the boat dock, the wind began raging and the temperatures quickly dropped. The wind was so strong it created waves higher than our boat and before we knew it, water filled the boat causing it to capsize. This resulted with us being thrown in the freezing water more than a mile offshore. It was at this point that I thought my life was over. Immediately, I began praying. It was the only solution I had for the situation, yet it came so naturally and instinctively. While floating, my uncle and friend who are not practicing Catholics, noticed me praying which sparked something within them because out of nowhere they began to pray along with me. We all continued to pray in the water for what seemed like an eternity. Finally, by the grace of God, we were rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard and brought back to shore after waiting in the water for over thirty minutes. While the Coast Guard picked us up, I am certain it was God who saved us. Through our prayers, we remained calm and focused, allowing us to stay afloat in the choppy water and thus overcoming the problem. Even though I feel close to God on a daily basis, this event in my life brought me even closer to God...assuring me that Christ is really alive.

The Flames of Control

“Jesus answered him, ‘If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.’” (John 14:23) These words from John help me understand that if we love, then we will receive love back. My mother passed away in 2020 and her loss was the greatest pain I ever felt in my life. During my special moment with God I felt his love and my mom’s love too. I felt like she was proud of me for letting go of certain things I wanted control over.

During an eighth-grade retreat, Mrs. M. told us to write down things we wanted to control, but do not have the power to. I filled my small piece of paper with tons of things and as I wrote them down, I kept asking myself why I held on to my grief for so long. Soon after that, Mrs. M. took my group to the back of the youth house. She told us to put the paper in a bucket. She pulled out a lighter and lit them on fire. She said that when we hold onto things we want to control, it brings us more anxiety and keeps us from the peace letting it go gives us. Having this kind of peace guided me to understand love.

As soon as Mrs. M. said these words, I felt tears burn in my eyes. As I looked at the burning papers, I could feel myself begin to cry. I asked myself why I wanted to control these things. How could these words on a mindless piece of paper help me grow towards Him through trust? But when I saw the paper burning and hearing Mrs. M’s words, I felt a sense of understanding of how God wants us to let go of control and give him the power to control the things we cannot. When we burned the paper, I felt relieved from holding onto the sadness for so long. When I cried, I felt that the weight on my shoulders was gone and that God, Jesus, and my mom were at my side. This shows that Christ can be alive in the simplest things.

Through a small eighth-grade retreat, my whole perspective on faith and my life changed. Living with the longing for control over things we cannot, will only give us a bigger reason to step away from God. Letting go and trusting Jesus and God with all these pointless things that we will never be able to control, will bring us more peace than any power in the world. Every human wants to have power in their hands. Just wanting it will not give it to you. You need to trust in God and He will provide His power through the gifts He gave you.