

## SECOND PLACE – WINNER OF \$1,000 SCHOLARSHIP

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I have worked with the Sisters of St. Joseph a lot these past couple years and I have realized all the work that they have towards their mission. Working with the sisters has really inspired me to go out and use their mission to help those around me. This has helped me focus in on my life and use some of the experiences in my life to help the people around me.

In my own personal life I find it very easy to relate to the mission that the sisters have set for themselves, and see that unity and reconciliation between all people and religions is very important. I have many friends who aren't Catholic and I find that sometimes it is important to be considerate of each other's religions and to strive for unity between us than to dwell on our differences. The saying that two heads are better than one come to mind when I think about unity, because I believe that if people around the world unite then we can accomplish so much more than we ever could by ourselves. So to resonate this I always strive to work with people that I wouldn't normally work with and form new bonds between others and me so that we can help each other out in the future and use our unity to form more bonds with others.

The second part of the sisters' mission that I try to resonate in my daily life is the part about reconciliation. Reconciliation to me is very important because it deals with forgiveness; and that is something that we are running a little short on in this world. I find that a lot of problems can be avoided if we just forgive each other. True forgiveness can only be achieved if we give our problems to God and let it go and know that he will take care of it for us. Reconciliation is also being able to compromise and work with others, what I mean by this is that we should be able to see what we did wrong and work on correcting it to make it right.

Personally I see right now that there is a need for unity and reconciliation between all the sections of Christianity. I believe that right now the gospel is calling us to look at what is causing the rifts between the different religions and to solve them. I have seen the division between the different religions many times in my life because as I said before many of my friends aren't Catholic. It is obvious sometimes that there is a rift between us when we talk about different issues that hit on religion. To me I find that I am curious about the other religions and want to find out the ways that we are alike. Truly I believe that if we would just forgive each other for things that have happened in the past I think that we would see how much we truly have in common.

In the past, so many acts were done in the name of God, and I believe that is really what started all of the fights between the religions. Deep down we all have the same fundamental beliefs and it is unfortunate that we cannot look at it this way. We all believe in God and the fact that Jesus Christ is our savior and we could just focus on this we would be able to work together very efficiently. I will always remember my mom telling me about a girl she rode the bus with and how they were such good friends until the girl found out that my mother was Catholic. After that they couldn't be friends anymore, not because they had some major issue they couldn't resolve; but just the fact that someone in the past had said that Catholics and Lutherans didn't like each other so they couldn't be friends.

I find that if all the religions could just put aside their little differences they could touch so many more people's lives. Because then it wouldn't be just the Catholics preaching to the Catholics, or the Lutherans preaching to the Lutherans. No, it would be people from every religion preaching to each other and spreading the good word of God, and touching 'so many more lives. Learning what caused the problem in the past and using that knowledge to not let it happen again is what will keep us moving forward towards the goal of unity and reconciliation.

To me the idea that we are all disciples of God and that our job is to go out and spread the good word really comes to mind when I think about living out the mission that the sisters have set

forth. At first when I heard that we were all disciples of God it didn't really make any sense to me but the older I get and the farther I go along on my faith journey I realize how much of a disciple everyone is. One of the ways that I use my discipleship to help live out the mission is to be a counselor at camps that the sisters offer.

I find that if you speak to the girls when they are younger they are a lot more willing to listen to you and consider what you are trying to teach them. Through being a counselor I have realized the power of a young mind and how devoted these young women are to their faith and how much it influences me to be stronger in my faith. With the girls it not only helps me with learning the values of unity and reconciliation, but it shows me more ways each year how I can show the new groups of girls the great benefits that these values can have. When I think about unity I think about the service projects that we have the girls do to help out the sisters. If the girls did not come together and believe and unite in what they were doing we would have not got done near the work that we did.

Besides being a counselor another way that I live out my mission is through talking with my friends, I have found out over the past eighteen years how many misconceptions there are concerning Catholics and our beliefs. We have all heard the classic, "Why do you worship Mary" question and many times wonder why they just don't get it. When I talk to my friends I find that after I explain that we don't worship Mary that we just pray to her for 'help and guidance it seems that this helps them understand Catholicism more. I find that the more we talk between us the more we find that we have in common, and this is something that I believe brings us closer together. After we have talked a lot we find that much of the mission's work that we do is the same and it is geared towards the same goal. As we become more understanding of each other I find that we become more united and see that we can work together towards the same goal.

Also I find that the more I work with my friends and the sisters how much easier the idea and process of reconciliation is. I find that the more searching that I do within myself and with my friends the easier it is to see what has happened in my life that needs to be reconciled. I also find that I am a lot more at peace when I have reconciled some of the problems that have been bothering me.

When I started I really didn't think that I was living a certain mission and I don't know that mine is set in stone right now, but what I do see is how much this mission has helped me and others become the people we are today. I would just like to end by saying thank you to all the sisters that I have worked with, because they have truly helped me see more than I could have ever imagined. And thank you for taking the time to read this scholarship letter.