



Annual Fund Dinner Student Presentation

September 19, 2019

Good evening. My name is Claire Williams. I'm a senior here at Bishop Chatard, and I attended Christ the King. I am honored to be able to share this evening with all of you.

"Let the peace of Christ control your hearts." Colossians 3:15

A simple phrase with a depth of meaning so profound and enlightening, we can never fully understand it.

But we can try.

The human heart in a figurative sense, meaning our emotions and passions, is not something that is traditionally "controlled." Modern culture has promoted, and even praised, the idea of "following your heart" in a spontaneous and carefree way. And there's some truth to that. Our hearts are not supposed to be refined or constricted. Our feelings should be free to flow naturally, and guided in a way that reveals our true identity as humans.

However, the modern world has created a culture that is held in a *constant headlock* with things competing for control over our hearts in an unhealthy way. If we were to take a step back and do a little self-examination, we may find ourselves startled, even alarmed, at what things in our life hold the most meaning.

So, let's do it. Let's take a moment and ask ourselves what controls us, our minds, our hearts? What shapes our everyday life and forms our very identity as humans? Most of us, if we're being honest, are reluctant to admit to being controlled by material goods and fabricated realities. Our society has granted an immense deal of power to objects and, as humans, we constantly find ourselves worrying about the next best thing: the next iPhone, the next promotion, the next vacation. These things will change, come and go, and their waiver-y nature fails to provide a solid foundation to build our lives around.

Accumulating material wealth will not result in a lasting salvation. And while achievements in the classroom are valuable, they are not by any means the determining factor when evaluating one's success in life. Bishop Chatard has taught me that high school, and education in general, is so much more than lesson plans and exams. True success in life is measured by our ability to create meaningful relationships and memories. God *made us* for relationship, we learn that in Genesis with Adam and Eve. We aren't supposed to walk this road alone. Humans wouldn't be humans without our constant desire to connect with others, ourselves, God, and the world around us. And I've come to believe that these relationships are meant to emulate Jesus and act as yet another immensely, arguably the most, powerful way to spread His love. Chatard has allowed me to be successful in the classroom without sacrificing relationships. I've seen genuine care from all my teachers in ways that have *nothing* to do

with our class work. I have never felt more connected to a community than I have at Bishop Chatard.

And those strong connections have fostered a growth and development in my faith resulting from the outpouring of care and genuine love I have felt, serving as a constant reminder of the presence of Jesus in even the smallest encounters. We can find the presence of Jesus through each other in ways material objects just can't compare. These connections, if cultivated properly, provide the chance for the *peace of Christ* to enter our lives.

Things change. We change. We grow and we learn with every day we live on this earth, every single one of us. Things will never quite be the same as they are right now, and that's okay. They aren't supposed to be. Life is a culmination of various chapters that all hold a purpose in developing our hearts and identities. Changes lead us to new relationships that hold the potential of revealing even more of God to us. Changes often challenge us and that, too, is good. Challenge *is* good. It allows us to reach our full potential and truly strive for greatness instead of just living comfortably. Challenges strengthen us and often reveal truths we may otherwise have never encountered, and I've experienced this firsthand.

This past summer, I was working on college applications very late one night. As the early hours of morning approached, I found myself feeling lost, fretting the future and *all* it holds, confused about who I was and where I was going. All I could think about was everything that was about to change in my life. Realizing how complicated life is about to be is hard when you've been living a simple, happy life. But in this challenge, I discovered something profound and looking back, I'm still amazed with this experience.

So back to that night, I'm lying awake, scared, feeling as if I had no control of my life, when one of my friends, someone very special to me, recognized my struggle and pointed me to a bible verse, my very favorite now, Jeremiah 29:11. It reads, "For I know well the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, so as to give you a *future of hope*." These words are *so* powerful. God has a plan for me, a plan for each of us, one that we cannot change. Placing trust in God will bring this plan to fruition and reveal a humanity that is the very best reflection of our creator. Instead of focusing on everything that's about to change and giving power and control to temporary distractions, we are challenged to fix our eyes on the one, guaranteed constant in this world, God. Keeping this indispensable relationship strong will make all the changes in life more bearable.

This night for me, this challenge that I faced, taught me that if I keep God's will in my heart, I will find my way. And discovering that brought a *whole new* kind of peace into my life. Allowing this peace and presence of Jesus to control our lives will cultivate hearts fixed to the eyes of God.

There is no doubt in my mind that God was present that night, revealing himself through not only His word in scripture, but through the deliverer of that message.

Let the peace of knowing God has a plan and the knowledge of His presence in every relationship we encounter, *control our hearts*. Thank you!