

Senior Class Retreat I: “Let the little children come to me.”

“I have always purposely scheduled this retreat around the holiday season, usually the weekend before Thanksgiving. There’s just something about this time of year that calls out to us, asking us to slow down, to reflect and to remember. While we are all in need of this time, I think it’s particularly important for seniors who usually don’t have or take the time to slow down. Their stress levels are extremely high as they are caught somewhere between enjoying the present and preparing for a mysterious future that can, at times, seem very scary.”

Toward the end of last school year, I wrote a reflection on the retreat program we offer for our senior class here at BSM. The above paragraph was my introduction, and I honestly could not do better than to simply restate it for you here. On the weekend of November 20 and 21, 70 seniors made a return to childhood, if only for a weekend. The spirit of this first retreat is to recapture the child within us, and I have to say that the seniors did a beautiful job of doing just that. We put up a Christmas tree, and each person made an ornament which symbolized themselves. Just watching the seniors with construction paper, scissors, markers and tape was amazing in itself.

Throughout the weekend, in large and small group, we had the opportunity to reflect on where we have been that has helped to bring us to where we are. We shared childhood pictures and memories, challenges and struggles, faith and hope. Through it all, we were there for each other as a visible sign of what the faith community of BSM is all about. We celebrated a special mass together on Saturday night with Father Tim Morin from Holy Name of Jesus in Medina as our presider, subbing for our chaplain Father Tim Wozniak who was unable to make it.

The closing service on Saturday night is always a special time for everyone on this weekend; and not even the late night ice storm that turned the entire camp into a skating rink could stop us, although it did make traveling from place to place extremely difficult on Saturday night and Sunday morning. We gathered around the fireplace in the dining hall, each with an individual candle, and talked about the real difference that each person’s light makes in the world. I read a story called “The Crippled Lamb” by Max Lucado, stressing one important line from the story: “God does have a special place for me!” I pray that these seniors never forget that – God does have a special place for them!

The weekend was unforgettable but went far too quickly. Sunday afternoon found us reflecting on the weekend and preparing to take back with us something of what we had learned and experienced together. Each senior received a small pin of a child in the palm of God’s hand, a symbol of all that we had shared on this first retreat. I told the kids what I say to every senior class at this time: we all have to grow up, but I pray that in growing up, we never grow old because to grow old means we forget the child that continues to live within each of us and needs to be acknowledged and recognized. “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”

The staff on this first senior retreat was outstanding. In addition to the six members of our faculty and staff who joined us for the weekend, we had 19 Shared Ministers from St. John’s and St. Ben’s, and 8 BSM alums, two of whom are presently students at the University of St. Thomas. Watching the interplay between the Johnnies/Bennies and Tommies provided some great entertainment! It was especially significant for me, being a St. Thomas alum and coordinating a program at St. John’s/St. Ben’s. I guess you could say that I have the best of both worlds. Add that to my ministry at BSM, and I am one very blessed individual!

“I think it helped bring my faith back to my attention. It is easy when you’re busy to not have your faith front and center, and this retreat was a great reminder of the great relationship I have with God.”

Vince Beacom

“It helped me to see God in others and reaffirmed my beliefs.”

Anonymous Senior

“It made me reflect and realize how many gifts God has truly given me and how I am blessed.”

Kyle McCarthy