

Gala Speech #2

Tonight, I ask you to ponder this quote from Scripture: "...And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate them up...Others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. Anyone who has ears to hear should listen."

(Matthew 13: 4-9) What does Jesus mean when He says this? I think He is referring to the soil of our souls. As Catholics, we should be striving with all of our might to become Saints – this begins with enriching the earth of our souls, so that the seeds of Truth may grow in us.

I came to Lourdes in sixth grade after previously being homeschooled. Two of my younger siblings were enrolled for the coming year, and my parents encouraged me to consider going to the school. I was uncertain, so I decided to shadow. When I shadowed, I had an incredible experience. The teachers and classes were wonderful, and the students were warm and welcoming. But the deciding factor for me was the encounter I had with Christ while I was there. We went to Mass, and I experienced Jesus in the most profound way receiving the sacrament of Eucharist with this beautiful, faith-filled school. God showed me that I was called to go here, and I immediately felt at peace with this decision. Even though the school year had begun, I enrolled and started going to Lourdes two days later. I didn't know it at the time, but Lourdes would cause my soul to flourish during the next three years.

Lourdes has since become my second family. The environment here is loving, wholesome, and vibrant. The teachers are extremely generous, giving of their time and their own deep, Catholic experience. They share their wisdom and virtue to encourage the growth of their students. And the students reflect this generosity, creating an atmosphere of learning and camaraderie that feels like home. This love nourishes the students' soil like a warm spring rain.

The education at Lourdes is incomparable. We students thrive on the classical approach. Our teachers draw from us the love of discovery; they encourage wonder, and foster a love for learning. We encounter truth in all our studies, whether it be discussing themes from the Tale of Two Cities in literature class or nature journaling in science class. By encouraging wonder, they deepen our desire for truth – like roots reaching deep into soil.

But perhaps the most important part of my education is the spiritual growth. Lourdes is a fertile place, where each of us can grow spiritually. We go to Mass four days a week, pray in adoration regularly, and are welcome to receive confession almost anytime – unless Mr. Beach thinks we are using it to try to get out of gym class! Our teachers and Fr. Brian coach us DAILY on how best to become saints; how to triumph over each of our sins and bad habits, and to seek the Lord in all things. We aim everything we do for the greater glory of God.

To make sure a garden continues to grow, one must tend it persistently. It needs to be weeded and fed, watered and shaped. This is just as important as planting the garden.

As I am in eighth grade, I will not be here next year. I will be moving on to high school and to different places in life. But the gifts I have received at Lourdes will remain with me for life. There are so many examples of how Lourdes has “set us up for success”: We take relativism and apologetics courses in Theology class to best defend Truth. We learn to think things through on our own, wrestling with that discord in our minds until we come to the answer. We learn to love and respect each other as children of God. And we learn how to have a deep and personal relationship with Jesus – the most important thing we could possibly learn.

Our soul is like a garden, and Lourdes nourishes that garden. Our soil is made rich with love and grace. Lourdes plants the seeds of Truth in us, and sets our roots deeply. They encourage the flowering plant of our relationship with Christ. And they give us the tools to tend to that garden, both now and in years to come. The most noble goal of all is to become a saint. And I cannot imagine a school more focused on this – in the end, I cannot imagine a more noble school.