

Good morning, (pause). Fr. Adam asked me to speak to you all today. To be honest, I had no idea what to talk about. Thanks to some time in Adoration and talking with my mom, I was showed just how much I could talk about today.

Since this particular talk is going to mostly be about my life and how the Eucharist has affected my life, you all need a little bit of information about me. My name is Ariana Fryer. I am 15 years old. I am the oldest of 6 children, having 4 younger brothers and 1 younger sister. My parents actually homeschool all 6 of us kids.

I've been Catholic my whole life, as have my parents and grandparents. My grandma on my Dad's side was born and raised in Ireland until she moved to England and met and married my grandpa. Then they moved to the U.S. My grandma was a thoroughly Irish woman who could talk for hours with any stranger on the street. She also loved her faith. Combining those two, my grandma would be working out in the gym and start talking to a person. She would talk to them about her faith, her children, her life. She would pray for them and be a wonderful witness for Christ. She was really a very faith-filled woman.

My grandma and grandpa actually both just passed away one year ago. My grandma was really sick and we knew that she was going to die soon when she didn't even want to drink her tea. I was told later that every night she would beg Jesus to take her home. Exactly 13 days after

my grandma died, my grandpa followed suit. He'd been battling cancer years longer than the doctors thought would. It was a blow to my family to have them both gone, but it wasn't one that we couldn't bear. We knew that both of them were strong in their faith and we were confident that they'd made it to heaven. It was really our faith that got us all through that.

On the other side of my family, my mom, her brother, and my grandma used to live on the south side of Chicago. She was a single deaf mom struggling financially and there were a few years in my mom's childhood when they didn't have a car. So, every Sunday my grandma would take my uncle and my mom to Mass. But because they didn't have a car, they'd have to take the bus, train, and walk to get to mass. And although there were parishes closer to them, they would go farther to reach the deaf church. And they did that every Sunday. Rain or shine. Hot or cold.

From my grandparents, my parents learned the importance of their faith, which they're currently trying to pass on to my siblings and I.

They've done so many things to try to impress on us the importance of faith. When we're planning a family vacation, the first thing my parents look for is a Catholic Church. When we went to Florida for a vacation one year we made sure to stop and visit the place of the very first mass in St. Augustine.

(laugh) Also, you should see the amount of saint books and books about the mass or children's bibles that we have on our bookshelves at home. But honestly, I think that that is one of the biggest factors. From when we were really little, Mom would always read out loud to us. Sometimes she read us fictional books and sometimes she read us books about the saints and other aspects of our faith.

Also, another thing that's gotten my faith to where it is now is one of our homeschool groups. We're part of a Catholic homeschool group called St. Scholastica. They have so many opportunities to deepen your faith while hanging out with your friends. My brother Connell actually just went to a teen event at St. Peter's in Volo. They started with adoration and confession. After they'd done that they played a trivia game using the Catechism as the questions. Then the priest, Fr. Nathan, had them all walk down the street to McDonald's to get Shamrock Shakes, because it was St. Patrick's Day.

And that homeschool group does so many other things too. Just last November we had an All Saint's Day party that was down in the PLC here at Prince of Peace. At the saint party, the kids all dress up like the saint of their choosing and play saint related games like a bean bag toss game where the target is the middle of Goliath's forehead or a "pin the tail on the donkey" type game where you had to get a bouquet of roses into St. Therese's hands. All of these things make living your faith fun for kids because sometimes faith can seem like such a boring thing

to kids. To them, faith is just something that makes them have to sit still through a whole hour long mass every week. But when you put them with a bunch of kids who all have the same faith as they do, they begin to realize that faith isn't only for adults. It can be for kids too.

Every August my family goes on retreat with the same 5 other families at the International Schoenstatt Center in Waukesha, Wisconsin. We've been doing this for many years now and we've gotten to know those other families really well. While on retreat, you have mass every day with adoration at night. Adoration for the teens is held in the shrine, with the adult adoration being in the house chapel. There's something about the candle-lit shrine and the cool summer night air combined with the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar that I just really look forward to every year. There was one year where we were praying in the shrine and there were a few girls from another country in there too. I am pretty sure they were from Argentina, but anyway, we all decided to sing songs. Their voices and ours mixed together, singing songs of praise in the small shrine. It was just really cool to have people from two completely different countries joined together praising the same God.

I think it was actually two years ago now that my friends and I, the friends from Schoenstatt, went to the St. John Bosco Youth Day held outside at Holy Hill Cathedral. It was a day filled with inspirational speakers and songs. There was Mass and adoration and confession too. I remember kneeling in the wet, muddy grass in the tent constructed to

hold the Blessed Sacrament while it was displayed for adoration. I was examining my conscience, waiting for the next confessional to be open. I'm not sure exactly why, but it was such a touching experience. I was surrounded by other youth, on fire with their faith. We were all there, united in our love for our Lord.

And I cried. I cried right there, kneeling in the grass, in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

Ever since that day, I've loved adoration. So many times I've come and knelt in adoration, searching for answers and peace. And so many times I've received just that from the graces I get from adoring the Lord right there in the Blessed Sacrament.

I've also started doing something that I was prompted to do by my confirmation sponsor. After my confirmation, she gave me a journal-y type book. It was empty. She wrote me a letter explaining what she had intended me to use that book for. She told me that that would become my "Letters to God" book. So almost every night since my confirmation, I would write in that book, writing letters to God. It honestly has helped me so much because it is so easy for your mind to wander during anything really, but especially for me during prayers.

I was looking at colleges the other day, trying to plan out the road ahead of me. (chuckle) You know what the first thing I looked for when I was browsing the website of each of the colleges? A Newman Center.

But you see, that's what my faith formation so far has done for me. My faith and my church are such an important part of my life that I couldn't imagine not having them.

Like I have seriously been so blessed to be growing up in such a wonderful parish. We have so many great priests. Priests who get to know you and joke around with you. Priests who take you to plays about saints or to a retreat night at Mundelein Seminary. And there's so many opportunities to be involved here in the church too. For example, I am in the teen choir. I am a Eucharistic Minister. Sorry, I mean I'm an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. I'm a lector. I am a leader in the youth group. Do you know why I'm doing all those things? Because I love my faith, my church, and the extended family that I've gained from this parish community. And my love for those things is because of all the different things that my parents did for me to show me just how wonderful my faith really is.

So. I'm not exactly sure what Fr. Adam was hoping for you all to get out of this, but I hope I've accomplished it. I do know one thing though. I actually got quite a bit out of this myself. It is in times of great stress that one turns closer to the Lord, and let me tell you what, I was just a tad stressed. So, thank you. (walk down steps and back to seat)