



Last night we celebrated another successful Annual Fund Dinner. Thank you to all who attended!

What follows are the words I shared at the 2012 Annual Fund Dinner. They were true then; they are true today:

It is an honor and a privilege to be here tonight. Bishop Chatard has been a part of my life for 38 years. I am a graduate of the Class of 1978, as is my wife, Carol. I worked here as a teacher and coach, returned later as the Athletic Director, and had four children come through the school over the years: Mary ('02), Rick ('04), Laura ('07), and Robby ('10).

What was it about my own personal experience with this school that has kept me coming back? Why do I still feel so indebted to BCHS?

When I was a 15-year-old sophomore at Bishop Chatard, my mom died of viral pneumonia. She was 43. She had never been sick a day in her life. One day she wasn't feeling too well; two weeks later she died.

As much as I loved my dad, he was in over his head. Like most men of his generation, my dad was the breadwinner and mom raised the kids. He not only lost his wife, but he also suddenly a single parent of six. I was a fifteen-year-old kid, and I pushed the boundaries with Dad.

I occasionally took *steps* in the wrong direction, but was always pulled back onto the right path quickly. The hands pulling me back came from my Bishop Chatard family. When you are a part of the Bishop Chatard family, people have your back. You are not left to battle alone.

Teachers in the building kept an eye out for me. They knew my mom was gone. They were there for me without making me feel pitied or lost. My teachers took care of me. The teachers at Bishop Chatard now do the same for countless other students in need of a mentor.

I knew I was safe and I knew I was loved. When I became a teacher myself, my goal was to make students feel safe and loved.

When Mom died, the entire football coaching staff came to the funeral home to support me and make sure I was OK. I remember distinctly that it was a Friday afternoon in September, three hours before the Trojans were to kick off against Carmel.

I was a *sophomore* on a Bishop Chatard football team with over 100 players on it. I was *JV*. And yet, the entire staff, with head coach Steve Purichia leading the way, walked into that funeral home and made me feel like the most important kid in their program.

Years later, when I became a head football coach myself, my goal was to make every kid feel like the most important kid in *my* program.

When I *did* become a teacher, I wanted to be at Bishop Chatard. The BCHS contract for my first year as a teacher in 1987 was for \$14,362.00. What intelligent, responsible 27-year-old man with a wife, a 4-year-old, a two-year-old, and a baby on the way, would not have jumped at such an offer?

In exchange for those big bucks, I taught 6 out of 7 periods per day, taught 4 different courses in two different departments, coached 3 sports, and was the freshmen class sponsor. Two days before school was to begin the principal brought me, his newest teacher, into his office and told me that he needed me to teach a section of Geography. I had never even *taken* Geography before, but sure, I'll teach Geography.

I remember sitting in a circle with my nine less-than-eager sophomore students and admitting that I did not have a *clue* about Geography. "But we have the next 18 weeks together," I said. "So let's open up this book and find something that interests us and learn about it." We did, and we had a ball. Three months later, we started the first-ever National Geography Week at Bishop Chatard. We made daily Geography fun fact announcements on the PA and hid Geography clues throughout the building, leading to exotic locations.

I remember teaching Psychology. I brought my own children into class and we did psychological experiments on them. My students loved my kids and my kids felt at home in the building.

I didn't do any of these things to show that I was worth my \$14,000. I did it because I wanted my students to feel safe, and important, and loved.

I think the reason I was invited to speak tonight was to talk about how the religion classes and Campus Ministry programs I experienced while a student at Bishop Chatard helped form me in my faith, and led me to seek a vocation in the Church.

I'm afraid I am not much help there. There was no Campus Ministry program started yet, so there were no organized retreats and no service requirements. And I don't really remember too much from Religion classes. I am sure the classes were fine and were taught quite well, but I was a teenage kid trying to figure out why my Mom was dead. I was really not all that interested in God.

However, I can tell you with certainty that I am ordained today as a direct result of my experiences at Bishop Chatard, both as a student and as a staff member. But it has nothing to do with lessons in a book.

I did not *learn* my faith at Bishop Chatard. I was not *trained* in my faith. Lessons gained through learning and training can be forgotten. Bishop Chatard helped *form* my faith. When you are *formed* in your faith, it becomes who you are. It defines you.

Please invest in the *people* of Bishop Chatard. Put your money in people who make children feel safe, loved, and important. In people who are formed in their own faith and so become a living billboard of what a faith-filled life looks like.

Put your money in people who promote service by serving, who promote prayer by praying, who promote love and justice by being loving and just. Put your money in people who wash feet for a living.

Your donations to the annual fund will help fund financial aid programs that will in turn allow more students to benefit from a Bishop Chatard education. You will help fund programs that promote faith and service. You will help build upon the legacy of Bishop Chatard by changing lives, one student at a time.

Thank you for your ongoing support of Bishop Chatard!