

PTS NEWSLETTER

PIERRE TOUSSAINT SCHOLARS PROGRAM

S U M M E R 2 0 2 6 E D I T I O N

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR



Director with PTSP Team Member, Mr. Alan Garcia, and Cristo Rey Brooklyn Scholars @ the annual Winter Workshop

It's that time of year once again as we bid farewell to our graduating scholars and welcome a new class into the Pierre Toussaint Scholars family!

This has been another year of growth and transition. We have welcomed a new Archbishop, settled into a new office, and continued to evolve our program

thanks in large part to the dedication, guidance and support of Catholic Charities and the Pierre Toussaint Education Fund Board of

Directors. Through it all, one thing has remained constant: your faith which continues to inspire us.

Thank you for answering the call to serve throughout the year. Thank you for checking in and keeping us informed about your academic and personal progress. Thank you for your patience as the program continues to transition and grow. Most importantly, thank you for your continued prayers and support.

As we conclude the academic year with our annual Summer Retreat, we also look ahead to several exciting opportunities. This July, four scholars will participate in a Service Pilgrimage to Lourdes, France. In the fall, we will participate once again with the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice in Washington, D.C. And, God willing, next summer we will join young Catholics from around the world at World Youth Day in Seoul, South Korea.

Please continue to read your monthly email updates carefully and mark all important dates on your calendar, including our required program events - the Winter Workshop in January and the Retreat Weekend in June - as well as

scholarship renewal deadlines and submission requirements.

Above all, remember that we are here to support you. If there is ever anything we can do to assist you throughout the year, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Until next time...work hard & pray often! - *Leah*



Director with Scholars, Sophia & Mary Lou, in Lourdes, France for a week long service pilgrimage

Ignatian Family Teach-In Reflections from the PTS Delegates

This year was my second time attending the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice, and once again, it left a lasting impact on me. Being able to participate in this experience even once a year feels like a privilege, because each time I walk away with a deeper understanding of the realities people around me are living every day that aren't apparent on my own. At the Teach-In, I connected with students and educators from across the country, from New York to Louisiana, and listened to stories that were honest, vulnerable, and impossible to forget. It was a full circle moment running into my old high school Cristo Rey Brooklyn and seeing how young these students are having the opportunity to hear these stories. One story in particular has stayed with me. A young woman shared her life story, beginning from infancy, and spoke about growing up as the daughter of an undocumented immigrant father. While her mother had legal status in California, her father remained in Mexico. In his efforts to support and be present for his family, he attempted to cross the border more than 20 times. Each attempt ended in arrest or deportation, until he was ultimately banned from reentering the United States. As she spoke, it became clear how deeply this separation shaped her childhood. She shared that she and her siblings are now navigating complex legal processes in hopes of reuniting their family. Hearing her speak put a human face to immigration policies that are so often discussed without acknowledging the families behind them. The Teach-In made the realities of immigrant rights and the struggles immigrant families face feel impossible to ignore. In our small-group sessions, we moved beyond discussion and focused on action, learning how ICE reporting works, understanding our rights, and gaining the tools to advocate effectively for those who are most vulnerable. These conversations were empowering, reminding me that knowledge is not just informative, but protective, and that advocacy can begin at the community level. In addition to these powerful learning moments, we had the opportunity to visit Capitol Hill and speak directly with representatives from our districts. Last year, I met with legislative assistant and counsel Quincy Henderson, who represented a district different from my own but still took the time to listen as I raised concerns about gun legislation, school funding, education policy, and NYCHA. This year, I spoke with representatives from multiple districts and met with Ashley Celada on Capitol Hill. Following that meeting, I was able to schedule a Zoom conversation that gave me a clearer understanding of how individual voices and sustained advocacy can lead to meaningful change. The Teach-In reminded me that these issues are not distant or abstract, they affect real families, real communities, and real futures. It reinforced why speaking up matters and why continuing this work, even when it feels difficult, is necessary. - **Aniya John '27**



Attending the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice (IFTJ), was a powerful and grounding experience for me. This was my third time going- the previous times were in my Junior and Senior years in High School, but being there now as a college student allowed me to embrace what's going on around me to the fullest extent. We were surrounded by students, educators, and faith leaders from all over the country, which reminded me of the power of people coming together for justice, even when we all come from different backgrounds. A main discussion I attended, "Practicing Nonviolence in Violent Times," led by a mother who left El Salvador after surviving internal violence and generational trauma. She talked about the difference between violence and nonviolence- how injustice forces people into impossible decisions, and generational trauma lives in communities long after the violence stops. Her statement that El Salvador is "safe, but at what cost?" hit me. She described how 80,000 people were arrested under new policies, 10% of them innocent, and that trauma waves across generations. I've never lived through what she did, but I still felt the weight of her testimony.

Another discussion I truly appreciated going to was "Unfairness of Death Row," led by Mr. Brian, a lawyer who fought to prove the innocence of Dwayne Brown, a Black man who was wrongfully sentenced to death. Prosecutors hid evidence, trials were delayed, the whole system was against Dwayne Brown. Mr. Brian's mother was very ill during this time, his life was in a juggle, but his mother told Brian and her peers, "Don't pray for me, pray for Dwayne." That hit me really hard. Through tough trials and tribulations, Mr. Brian fought hard and was able to prove Dwayne's innocence. Dwayne also had a message that Brian told us- he stated, "I can't trust everyone, but I can love everyone," which felt like a reminder that justice work requires two Cs, both compassion and conviction. I was granted the privilege, on behalf of my Pierre Toussaint colleagues, to speak with my congressman, Mr. Adriano Espaillat, about the migration issues in the City, problems affecting my neighborhood, and they gave us resources to assist outside of an office. This made me feel like our voices were being heard. All in all, IFTJ was a fine opportunity to be part of. Being there strengthened my commitment to serving others through my future work and to be part of a generation that chooses: faith, hope, advocacy, and solidarity over silence. Leaving D.C. feeling grounded, powerful in-mind, and will forever continue to advocate for what's right. - **Jaden Jones '27**

I had the opportunity to attend the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice in Washington, DC for the first time, an experience that was both grounding and transformative. The conference created space for prayer, learning, and honest reflection on what it means to live out our faith through justice in today's world. One prayer in particular stayed with me throughout the Teach-In: "God, help us to accept the things that we cannot change, to change what we can no longer accept, and the wisdom to know the difference." This prayer echoed the theme of this year's conference, "Pressing On," which called participants to remain faithful and committed to justice even when the work feels long or difficult. Throughout the conference, speakers addressed urgent and interconnected issues such as migration and ecological justice, reminding us that care for humanity and care for creation cannot be separated. One of the most impactful moments for me was hearing Fr. Greg Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries, speak about kinship, compassion, and radical belonging. Through stories from his work in Los Angeles, Fr. Boyle illustrated what it looks like to build community rooted in love rather than judgment, reminding us that justice begins when we recognize one another as family. I also attended a breakout session titled "Walking by Faith, Fighting for Racial Justice: Voices of Our Time," featuring Dr. Ansel Augustine, Ralph McCloud, Ruth Morgan, and Kimberly Mazyck. The panelists reflected on the intersection of faith and racial justice, sharing insights drawn from organizing, advocacy, and ministry. They emphasized the importance of sustaining stubborn hope, a hope that persists even in moments of discouragement, and called listeners to remain rooted in faith while actively working toward systemic change. The session concluded with the words of Leah Chase: "Pray, work, and do for others," a reminder that justice requires both reflection and action. Overall, the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice was an inspiring and faith-affirming experience, one that strengthened my commitment to keep pressing on in the pursuit of justice, rooted in prayer, action, and hope. - **Sherroya Robb '28**

Through the Year



Scholars in Service @ Ascension Food Pantry (NYC) and with the Helping Hands Soup Kitchen @ Immaculate Conception Church (Bronx)



Staff visits with scholars @ University of Mount Saint Vincent, Villanova University, Seton Hall University & Loyola New Orleans



PTS Alumni attending and supporting ministry and scholar events.

SCHOLARS @ SCHOOL



FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

**Vianca, Carol, Erika,
Angel, Sofia & Nicole**



**UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME**

Sherroya & Joshua



**UNIVERSITY OF MOUNT
SAINT VINCENT**

**Edward, Jeremiah,
John Paul, & Jonah**



PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

Jaden & Angelina



VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY

Sisters - Shenaan & Leann



YALE UNIVERSITY

Penuela & Valeria

LA REFLECTION by Mary Igoe '28

Praised be Jesus Christ!

My name is Mary Igoe and I am a Rising Senior at the Catholic University of America (CUA). I was blessed to be able to go on mission with 10 other students from CUA to Los Angeles over our Spring Break. We were just one of six service trips being sent out from CUA this Spring Break (other trips were Jamaica, New York, Guatemala, Tucson, and El Salvador). Each one of these trips had a different focus in Catholic Social Teaching. My team focused primarily on serving those experiencing homelessness in the LA area, particularly in the Venice Beach area and Skid Row.

LA has one of the most densely populated homeless populations in the US with around 75,000 people living on the streets every night. During the week we were there, we got to serve most mornings either doing outreach on the Venice Boardwalk or serving as waiters/waitresses at the Bread and Roses Cafe. Both of these mission opportunities were beautiful ways to help those in need materially, but more importantly, we were given the chance to encounter these people. Often handing them a water bottle and a hygiene kit on the Venice Boardwalk or serving them a free hot meal at the Bread and Roses Cafe were opportunities to ask them how they were doing, learn their names, and hear their stories. When I was serving at the Cafe one morning, I struck up a conversation with a man while pouring him coffee simply because he was wearing a Yankee's baseball cap. By asking if he was a Yankee fan, we got into a conversation that went from talking about soccer, to his daughters, to his twin grandsons, and how his daughters were trying to help him get off the streets. The conversations I had with the people I met are some I hope I will never forget.

During our week, we got to tour Homeboy Industries which is the home of the largest gang rehabilitation program in the world. During the

course of our visit, we also got to meet Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J. who founded Homeboy! It was great to get to meet him as I know many of our scholars remember him from the Ignatian Teach-In for Justice!

Toward the end of the week, we got to help with meal services at the Union Rescue Mission and the Midnight Mission on Skid Row. This was a great experience to get to work behind the scenes in these large organizations that help thousands of people in one of the most densely populated homeless communities in the country.

Last year, my campus minister asked me what mystery of the Rosary I was in at that time. Throughout the course of the mission, I reflected on how many of the people we encountered were in the midst of their Sorrowful Mysteries. I realized on a deeper level that even though I may not understand what they are going through, Jesus does.

This mission allowed me to see even more clearly the beauty of every human life and to truly see the face of Christ in all people. I am so grateful for this opportunity and I look forward to serving on Mission more in the future. Please pray for all those who are suffering in this way and for the CUA community and be assured of my prayers for you all. May God Bless you and keep you.



COMING BACK HOME: STUBBORN HOPE IN THE FACE OF DIVISION by Sherroya Robb '28

“How will you ensure you follow the right path when facing persecution?”

If I am honest, sometimes it feels easier to stay scattered.

In the reading from the Book of Ezekiel, God speaks to a divided people and promises, “I will make them one nation... never again shall they be divided.” Israel had been split politically, spiritually, and communally. Division had become normal. And yet God does not accept that fragmentation as final. He promises a covenant of peace. He promises to dwell among them. He promises to gather what was scattered and His children.

There is something deeply comforting and deeply challenging about that. Because exile is not only about geography. It is about the ways we drift. The ways we distance ourselves from one another. The ways we grow comfortable in darkness because reconciliation feels costly.

The Responsorial Psalm from the Book of Jeremiah declares, “The Lord will guard us, as a shepherd guards his flock.” A shepherd does not abandon scattered sheep. He goes after them. He gathers them. He brings them home. That is stubborn hope—the kind that refuses to let division have the last word.

Then the Gospel of John shows us what that hope looks like in action. After witnessing Jesus’ signs, many believe. Others report Him. The religious leaders begin plotting His death. Following Him suddenly carries consequences. Reputation, safety, belonging—everything is at risk. And still, people look for Him in the temple and ask, “What do you think? That he will not come?” They are waiting. They are hoping. They are choosing to align themselves with someone the authorities want silenced.

Today, persecution can look like public shaming. It can look like losing followers instead of gaining them. It can look like backlash for speaking about justice, dignity, or faith in spaces that would prefer silence. It is often easier to stay quiet. To stay divided from what we believe. To protect our comfort. But Ezekiel reminds us that God’s peace comes when we return and refuse to let fear define us. Stubborn hope means following Christ not because it is safe, but because it is true. It means trusting that even when unity feels fragile and consequences feel real, God is still gathering His people.

And perhaps the real question is this: when the cost rises, will I still come back home?

BC JAMAICA MAGIS SERVICE by Timileyin Faba '27

This past winter break, I was honored to volunteer in Boston College's Jamaica Magis Service Immersion trip. Over the course of nine days, I served as a teaching aide in a Jamaican elementary school while immersing myself in the local culture and deepening my understanding of the community. It was a transformative experience that reaffirmed both my faith and my commitment to serving others.

We began every morning in prayer, asking God to strengthen our minds and hearts in preparation for the day ahead. In the first days we aided Jamaican locals and became more immersed in the culture. The director of the trip grew up in Kingston, so he is familiar with Jamaican customs. Through this, I became aware of the kindness and generosity of the Jamaican people. I was always greeted with a smile.

I was also made aware of the differences between Jamaican culture and ours. It was definitely a cultural shock. Adapting to their native dialect (Patois), learning the music and dances, and seeing how they show love to one another was beautiful. These moments pushed me outside of my comfort zone and allowed me to grow in ways I had not expected.

When we got to the school, I taught the fifth grade. I instantly fell in love with my class. Seeing their improvement in class and enthusiasm to interact with me warmed my heart. Leaving was bittersweet, knowing that I have left them with a newfound urge to learn yet not knowing if I would be able to return. I am blessed to have experienced all of these emotions.

In the winter of 2027, I will be returning to Jamaica, this time as a group leader. I want to be able to provide the same transformative experience to my group and show our love to the Jamaican community. Thank you to the Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program for helping me fund my travels and instilling values of service and humility that will last me a lifetime.



SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

- What Is It?

“Pay attention to God’s personal communication, respond to God, grow in intimacy with God, and live out the consequences of that relationship.”

— William Barry, S.J. & William Connolly, S.J.



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PROGRAM

The Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program is about far more than financial support and a community of mutual encouragement. It is also about spiritual growth, Christian discipleship, and each scholar’s relationship with the living God.

Our retreats, workshops, pilgrimages, justice teach-ins, and prayer experiences help us grow in friendship with God. **Spiritual Direction** is another opportunity to deepen that relationship.



WHAT HAPPENS IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION?

Spiritual Direction is a conversation between you and a trained spiritual director focused on your relationship with God.

You may talk about:

- Your prayer life
- Important decisions and discernment
- Spiritual challenges and questions
- Where you see God working in your life
- Your hopes, fears, and aspirations

A spiritual director listens, helps you recognize God’s presence in your life, and offers guidance rooted in faith and the tradition of discernment.



WHAT SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IS NOT

- ✗ It is not Confession
- ✗ It does not require a priest
- ✗ It is not counseling or therapy



Many spiritual directors are trained lay women and men who accompany others on their faith journey.



WHY CONSIDER SPIRITUAL DIRECTION?

Spiritual Direction can help you:

- ✓ Deepen your relationship with God
- ✓ Grow in prayer and faith
- ✓ Discern major life decisions
- ✓ Navigate difficult spiritual seasons
- ✓ Receive encouragement and support on your journey

Meetings may occur once or continue regularly, often on a monthly basis.

INTERESTED?

If you have questions about Spiritual Direction or would like to connect with a spiritual director, please reach out to:



BR. ALEC HUFFORD, S.J.
Spiritual Advisor



FR. KAREEM SMITH
Spiritual Director and
PTSP Chaplain



FR. WESBEE VICTOR
PTSP Chaplain



Or any member of the
Pierre Toussaint Scholars
Program Leadership Team
during the Retreat Weekend
or throughout the year.



“Be still and know that I am God.” — Psalm 46:10





CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2026 GRADUATES

DIANDRA C., JD

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY (NEW YORK, NY)

PARISH: BLESSED SACRAMENT, S.I.

HIGH SCHOOL: NOTRE DAME ACADEMY, S.I.

UNDERGRAD: FAIRLEIGH DICKINSON UNIVERSITY, NJ

“The Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program has been a constant source of support, guidance, and stability throughout my college and law school journey. It has allowed me to pursue my education with greater focus by easing financial burdens and connecting me with a community rooted in service, faith, and leadership. One of the most meaningful aspects of the program has been the opportunity to grow alongside fellow scholars who are equally committed to making a difference in their communities.

Through the program, I have been able to stay grounded in my values while navigating the challenges of higher education, and it has reinforced my commitment to pursuing a career in law centered on service and advocacy. The mentorship, encouragement, and sense of community I have received have truly shaped my personal and professional development.

I am deeply grateful for all that the program has provided me, and I carry its mission with me as I move forward into my legal career. I wish my fellow scholars and graduates continued success, fulfillment, and strength as we each pursue our paths, and I am confident that we will all continue to make a meaningful impact in the communities we serve. I look



forward to one day giving back to the Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program and supporting future scholars in the same meaningful way it has supported me.

I loved being a part of the program for 8 years. The support provided has been immeasurable and I will truly remember it forever. I also always loved the retreats we had and the time to catch up with fellow scholars. I would also love to thank Leah for her recommendations and support during my job search!

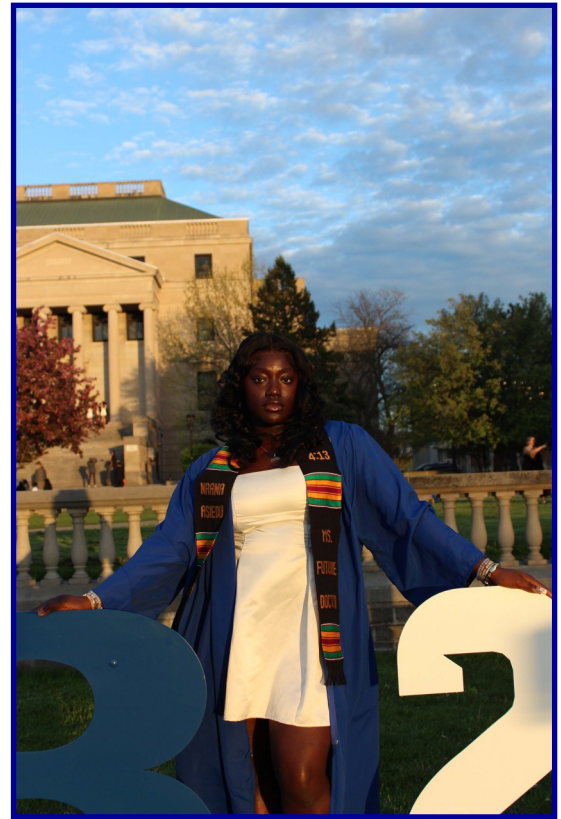
(POST GRADUATE PLANS: “I will be joining the New York City Administration for Children's Services, Division of Family Court Legal Services, as an Agency Attorney beginning Fall 2026. “)

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2026 GRADUATES



NAANA A.
UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO
(BUFFALO, NY)
BS IN BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
(PRE-MED)
PARISH: ST. LUKE'S, BRONX
HIGH SCHOOL: ARLINGTON HIGH
SCHOOL

“The Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program has been so much more to me than just a scholarship program, it has been a source of guidance, support, and encouragement throughout my journey. As I prepare to move on after graduation, I am incredibly grateful for the insurmountable opportunities, mentorship, and community they have provided me over the years. Their belief in my potential motivated me to work harder, dream bigger, and persevere through challenges. Through this program, I have grown not only academically, but also spiritually and professionally. The relationships and experiences I gained will stay with me long forever. I truly would not be where I am today without the generosity and dedication of everyone involved in the Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program. It has helped shape me into the person I am becoming, and for that I will always be thankful. As I move forward into the next chapter of my life, I will carry the lessons, values, and support of this program with me always. The programs such as winter workshop and volunteering events helped keep the program going giving us more opportunities to get to know each other.”



(POST GRADUATE PLANS:

“I will be taking a gap year to study for my MCAT while working as a Scribe Tech with CityMD.”)

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SCHOLARS PROGRAM



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2026 GRADUATES

DILON C.

STEVENS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (HOBOKEN, NJ)

BS IN BIOLOGY

PARISH: BLESSED SACRAMENT, S.I.

HIGH SCHOOL: XAVIERAN ACADEMY

“This program meant a great deal to me. I was able to stay connected to my faith in college. The music was very spiritual and empowering. Additionally the dances brought both fun and meaning to the retreat sessions. Overall, the experience helped connect me to God in a more powerful way each retreat and this strengthened my overall relationship with him.

Overall, the Holy Hour at the annual retreats was very powerful and the sessions and discussions with the retreat leaders were always eye opening. “

(POST GRADUATE PLANS: “I plan to apply to medical school this cycle.

I plan to attend medical school in the fall of 2027, with nothing specific guaranteed at the moment, but until then, I plan to take a gap year working as an EMT as I am finishing up a course.”)



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SCHOLARS PROGRAM

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2026 GRADUATES



JULIANA D.
PROVIDENCE COLLEGE
(PROVIDENCE, R.I.)
BA IN ECONOMICS
PARISH: OUR LADY OF GOOD
COUNSEL, NYC
HIGH SCHOOL: ST. VINCENT
FERRER HIGH SCHOOL



“The Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program means community and love to me. I have made such amazing friends and mentors who offer me support and strength in times of need. It is truly beautiful how we gather together, each of us having our own busy lives, to create meaningful work and connections. Every summer retreat I have participated in, has lead to me making new friends and creating very wholesome memories.

This program has created a space of love in which we can have the hard but necessary conversations that society often avoids. The Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program is special because it manages to create a sense of belonging and community for each of its members.”

(POST GRADUATE PLANS: “I will be doing my masters in Public Policy at Institute Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI). I also received an internship from CIEE working this summer as a team member for their high school summer abroad program.”)

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SCHOLARS PROGRAM



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2026 GRADUATES

GABRIELLA D.
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
(SOUTH ORANGE, NJ)
BS IN PSYCHOLOGY & CHEMISTRY
PARISH: ST. MARTIN DE PORRES,
POUGHKEEPSIE
HIGH SCHOOL: OUR LADY OF
LOURDES HIGH SCHOOL



“The Pierre Toussaint-Mother Cabrini Scholar Program has been key throughout my time in college in terms of giving me the tools I need to help others. From the program's workshops and retreats, I have experienced profound personal and professional growth. The Mental Health First Aid workshop I attended as a scholar, for example, continues to inform me on how to best support those around me. I leave each program inspired by my peers as well as those we learn about, including Mother Cabrini – a protector of children and adolescents and an advocate and leader in healthcare, social work, and the Church. I hope to serve in my community in a way as profound as those figures like Mother Cabrini who shaped New York, and I am continually inspired by my fellow scholars who intend to do the same.

(POST GRADUATE PLANS: “I am happy to share ...I will be attending medical school at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School in Newark, NJ beginning this July! NJMS will be undergoing a merger with Robert Wood Johnson and they will become one “Rutgers College of Medicine” in 2027. I will be remaining at the Newark campus all four years and am so excited! Being at University Hospital has been a top choice of mine for a long time due to their focus on health equity, and God certainly put thins in line for it to work out.”)

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CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2026 GRADUATES



SAMANTHA H.
DUKE UNIVERSITY (DURHAM, NC.)
BA IN ENGLISH & FRENCH
PARISH: OUR LADY OF MOUNT
CARMEL, BRONX
HIGH SCHOOL: IN-TECH ACADEMY

“The Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program is a family. During my time at Duke, Leah and Br. Tyrone have been a blessing and resource. They check in to see how I’m doing and I know that if I ever needed anything or needed someone to talk to, they would always be there for me. The PTSP has shown me that my faith isn’t merely an aspect of my life. Rather, my faith is something I have the privilege and opportunity to use in my career. Even if I’m not working in a faith related job, the workshops have taught me how to allow the core values of the faith to influence my work ethic. My favorite memory with the PTSP is going to Lourdes with Leah and four other students. While I struggled a bit during the pilgrimage, that pilgrimage changed my faith and provided me with a new community.



(POST GRADUATE PLANS:

“After Duke, I’ll be working at Thrive for Life with the Jesuits.
I will be working as a communications and development coordinator.”)

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PIERRE TOUSSAINT
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CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2026 GRADUATES

ALLISON L.

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY MARYLAND (BALTIMORE, MD)

BS IN BIOLOGY & CHINESE (PRE-MED)

**PARISH: ANNUNCIATION - OUR LADY OF FATIMA,
CRESTWOOD**

HIGH SCHOOL: DOMINICAN ACADEMY

“The Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program has been a constant throughout my college experience. I know that if I was ever struggling or needed a support system, they were always there to listen. I will always admire and praise the community that was built in this program.

One of the biggest impacts left on me was with the scholars I went to Lourdes, France with. Hope, Alex, Sam, and the other members of OLP showed me what it is truly like to fall in love with what you do and stay in love.

To my fellow peers, enjoy this moment. We did it! I can’t wait to hear about all the amazing things you do!”

(POST GRADUATE PLANS:

“I am taking a gap year before med school”)



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PIERRE TOUSSAINT
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CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2026 GRADUATES



**ANGEL M.
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY
(BRONX,, NY.)
BA IN ENGLISH (PRE-LAW)
PARISH: ST. JOHN CHRYSOTOM,
BRONX
HIGH SCHOOL: CARDINAL HAYES
HIGH SCHOOL**



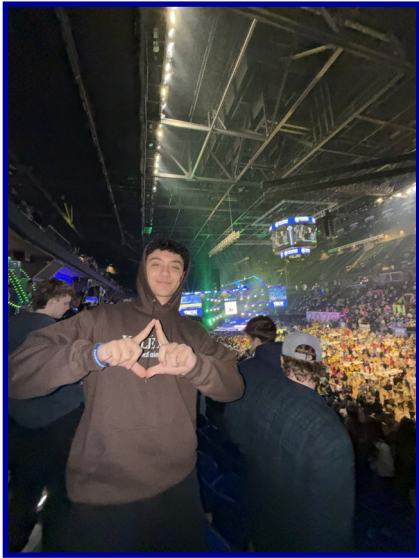
“The Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program has been a meaningful part of my college journey, providing me with both academic and personal support. Through the program, I was given opportunities that expanded my perspective, such as taking a course in London, which allowed me to grow both intellectually and culturally. One of the most impactful experiences was attending the Ignatian Teach-In for Justice, where I connected with individuals who share my values and passion for advocacy. Being able to speak with representatives at the U.S. Capitol was empowering and showed me the importance of using my voice for change. The program has not only supported my education but also helped shape my sense of purpose and community. It offered opportunities for leadership, advocacy, and meaningful connections that extended beyond the classroom. It also provided a space to engage with important social issues and grow alongside a community of driven, like-minded peers. To my fellow scholars and graduates, I wish you continued success, purpose, and courage as you move forward. May we all continue to uplift one another and make a positive impact wherever we go.

(POST GRADUATE PLANS:

“This year, I plan to dedicate myself to continuing my LSAT studies and preparing strong applications to law school. I want to be intentional about this process, using the time to fully center myself and build the skills necessary for the next stage of my academic and professional journey. Alongside this, I will begin teaching social justice with ACDP, where I will work with students to explore issues of equity, advocacy, and systemic change in a meaningful and engaging way.”)

DANCING FOR SOMETHING BIGGER THAN MYSELF...WHAT THON HAS TAUGHT ME ABOUT SERVICE

by Marcus Bennett '27



One of the most meaningful experiences of my time at Penn State has been my involvement with THON, the world's largest student-run philanthropy dedicated to supporting children and families impacted by childhood cancer. While many people know THON for its annual 46-hour dance marathon, what makes it truly special is the year-round commitment of thousands of students who work together to make a difference in others' lives.

As a Pierre Toussaint Scholar, I have always understood that receiving a scholarship comes with a responsibility. Beyond academic achievement, we are called to serve our communities, uplift others, and use our talents and opportunities to create positive change. My experience with THON has allowed me to put those values into action.

Through fundraising efforts, awareness campaigns, and volunteer activities, I have had the opportunity to contribute to a cause that extends far beyond Penn State's campus. Every dollar raised helps provide emotional, financial, and practical support to families navigating the challenges of childhood cancer. More importantly, THON reminds us that service is not simply about giving money; it is about giving time, energy, compassion, and hope.

One of the most powerful aspects of THON is the sense of community it creates. Students from every background come together with a shared purpose, united by the belief that no family should face childhood cancer alone. This collective commitment has shown me how much can be accomplished when people put service before themselves and work toward a common goal.

This year, I had the privilege of standing alongside my brothers from Delta Sigma Phi for all 46 hours of the dance marathon. While the physical challenge was significant, it was never about endurance alone. Every hour on our feet served as a reminder of the resilience demonstrated daily by children and families battling cancer. Sharing that experience with a group of individuals equally committed to serving others reinforced the importance of brotherhood, sacrifice, and collective action in pursuit of a greater cause.

As both a student and an athlete, I often think about the importance of discipline, perseverance, and teamwork. THON embodies these same qualities. Organizing events, engaging donors, and supporting fundraising initiatives requires dedication throughout the entire year. The experience has taught me that meaningful change rarely happens overnight; it is built through consistent effort and a willingness to serve even when recognition is not expected.

The most emotional moment of THON comes on the final day, when the families we have spent the year supporting take the stage and share their stories. After 46 hours on our feet, exhausted but energized by the cause, we hear firsthand about the challenges these families have faced, the victories they have celebrated, and the hope that organizations like Four Diamonds help provide. In those moments, the true meaning of THON becomes clear. As parents, children, and survivors speak about their journeys, there is rarely a dry eye in the Bryce Jordan Center. The stories remind us that behind every fundraising effort, every event, and every dollar raised are real people whose lives have been impacted by the generosity of others.

What made this year's THON especially meaningful was receiving the incredible news that our sponsored child through Four Diamonds had recently entered remission. After witnessing the challenges that many children and families face throughout their cancer journeys, hearing this news was a powerful reminder of why we dedicate countless hours to fundraising, advocacy, and service. It transformed THON from an abstract cause into something deeply personal and tangible. Celebrating this milestone reminded me that the work we do has a real impact on the lives of children and their families and that hope can be found even in the most difficult circumstances.

These experiences closely reflect the values of Pierre Toussaint himself. His life was defined by generosity, humility, faith, and an unwavering commitment to helping others. He understood that true leadership is measured not by personal success but by the impact we have on those around us. As Pierre Toussaint Scholars, we are called to lead lives rooted in service and compassion. The joy of celebrating our sponsored child's remission reinforced that philanthropy is not simply about raising funds; it is about investing in hope, standing beside families during their most difficult moments, and helping create opportunities for brighter futures.

The experience reinforced a lesson that both THON and the Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program seek to teach. When we come together in service of others, our individual contributions become part of something far greater than ourselves. Whether through fundraising, volunteering, mentoring, or simply supporting those in need, we all can make a difference.

As I continue my journey at Penn State and beyond, I hope to carry these lessons with me. Whether in my academic pursuits, professional career, or community involvement, I want to remain committed to the ideals that both THON and the Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program represent: compassion, service, integrity, faith, and a dedication to improving the lives of others.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of both communities. Together, they have reinforced my belief that even small acts of service can create lasting change and that when individuals unite around a common purpose, extraordinary things are possible.

For The Kids.



PIERRE TOUSSAINT SCHOLARS PROGRAM

RETREAT

JUNE 12 - 14, 2026

MOUNT SAINT MARY COLLEGE
Newburgh, NY

RETREAT THEME:
*Searching for
God's Peace and
Goodness in All Things*

Paz y bien

RETREAT LEADERS



Deena Sellers
Educator, mentor, and doctoral candidate passionate about faith formation, identity, belonging, and uplifting young voices.



Kayla August
Preacher and theology doctoral student who shares the Gospel with joy and invites others to recognize the message in their own lives.



Fr. Desmond Drummer
Priest, pastor, teacher, and advocate for justice committed to Catholic Social Teaching and building a better world for all.



Lauren Gentry
Director of campus ministry and passionate about helping young people encounter Jesus and His peace that changes everything.

SCRIPTURAL THEME:
"Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Let your kindness be known to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything..."
Philippians 4:4-9



ENCOUNTER GOD'S LOVE
Personal. Real. Transforming.



BUILD COMMUNITY
Grow in faith. Walk together.



CONNECT WITH PURPOSE
Discover who you are and who you're called to become.



SEEK PEACE IN CHRIST
He heals. He strengthens. He sustains.



LIVE WITH JOY AND COURAGE
Step into your mission. Change the world.

Come retreat with us. Come encounter peace. Come be transformed.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES
ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

THE CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF NEW YORK JUNIOR BOARD
CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO

A LEGACY OF LOVE AND SERVICE

MEMORIAL Mass

honoring
VENERABLE PIERRE TOUSSAINT

Celebrate the life of a man who transformed the heart of New York through tireless devotion and charity.

TUESDAY, JUNE 30, 2026 | 7:00 PM
The Lady Chapel | St. Patrick's Cathedral
Fifth Avenue at 50th Street, New York City

The Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program (PTSP) was established in 1983. PTSP provides support & mentorship to graduating high school seniors of diverse cultural/ethnic backgrounds, from public, private and parochial schools throughout the Archdiocese of New York, to assist them with the educational fees and expenses associated with their college studies. Students selected for the PTSP are chosen based on their strong academic record, their active participation with their parish and school communities, and their demonstration of good character and sound leadership ability. Scholarship awards are renewable for subsequent, consecutive years of undergraduate and graduate studies, based upon the scholar continuing to meet certain academic, service & program requirements. PTSP also provides the scholars with ongoing mentorship and advisement: spiritual, educational, professional career, and personal. To obtain more information regarding the program and /or to support the Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program, contact the us via email at ptscholars@gmail.com

The Pierre Toussaint Scholars Program and the Pierre Toussaint - Mother Cabrini Scholars Program (for scholars preparing for careers and ministries in fields of healthcare & social work) are made possible through the generosity of:

Mother Cabrini Health Foundation
The Black and Indian Mission Fund
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