



HARVARD CATHOLIC CENTER

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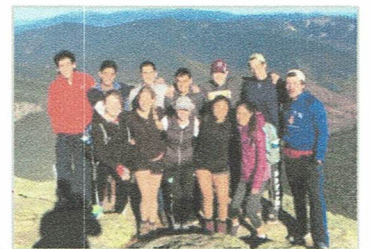


My name is Katherine Culbertson '18 and I am an Environmental Science and Public Policy concentrator, hailing from Manhattan, Kansas. I've been incredibly blessed to have become involved in the Catholic Student Association (CSA) throughout my time in Harvard - an experience that has played a large role in defining my college experience. When I first came to Harvard from Manhattan, Kansas I wasn't yet Catholic - my family was, but I had never given it any thought myself. I figured I would continue going to Mass on Sundays as I'd done with my family growing up, but I didn't have any other plans to further engage with faith on campus. However, the combination of some soul-searching conversations during my pre-orientation trip and the incredible community I encountered after Mass at St. Paul's changed this plan - and the entire trajectory of my time at Harvard. I was swept away by the sincere, dynamic Catholicism of the students I met in the Catholic Student Association, and decided to learn more about the faith I had grown up in.

I joined a Bible Study, attended various theological discussions sponsored by the CSA, and started going to weekly adoration at Totus Tuesdays. The amazing people I met and conversations I had only served to draw me in further. The more I learned about our Catholic faith, the further enchanted I became - especially after the publication of Pope Francis's powerful encyclical on environmental stewardship and social justice, *Laudato Si*. I've always been fascinated by the great outdoors and the beauty of the natural world, but I had never made the connection between caring for the poor and caring for the environment which Pope Francis makes so clear in *Laudato Si*.

Knowing I wanted to share what I had learned through this encyclical, and talk with other Harvard Catholics about these key issues, I started a discussion group on *Laudato Si* my sophomore year. This action eventually led to the formation of the St. Paul's Climate Justice Initiative this spring. I hope over the next year to continue nurturing this initiative, as we take concrete actions to improve energy efficiency, materials usage, and environmental justice communication in our local parish and community. We are excited to add a Catholic voice to concerns of environmental justice here in Cambridge, and hope to soon be able to reach out more broadly, in coalition with many other Catholic parishes that have already stepped up in acting on their faith at this crucial moment in history.

Becoming a leader in the Harvard Catholic community has been one of the greatest blessings of my time here at Harvard; I've had the honor of serving on the Steering Committee of the Catholic Student Association for the past year and half, and I look forward to continuing to serve this incredible organization this fall. A key focus for us currently has been increasing pre-frosh/freshman outreach this year. This spring, we had the strongest presence in recent memory at the Visitas activities fair, and hosted a spaghetti supper after student mass for prospective students. A couple of rising sophomores have enthusiastically stepped up to form a freshman outreach committee, helping to take the lead in planning fall semester outreach and our 3rd annual freshman retreat. We will also be starting an exciting new lecture series this fall called "Catholicism in the Real World" pioneered by our current VP of Intellectual Development, Jack Clark. Through this series we will engage with professionals, in various fields, living out their Catholic faith. We're excited to continue the offsite retreats we've instituted over the past year, under the lead of VP of Spirituality Ben Kelly and me, including a fall retreat in NYC, a Lenten retreat at St. Benedict Abbey near Harvard, MA, and fall and spring semester hiking retreats in the White Mountains of NH.



I can't wait to see where Our Lord leads us this next year, and am excited for all the adventures that await!