



My name is Lily Herman, and I will be graduating from Southington High School on Thursday along with Seth, Amanda, Kyle, and Luke.

You are holy, wonderful and blessed.

We've all heard these words before - it was our Rite 13 ceremony, the official beginning of our journey to adulthood - the ceremony that my mom cried through - and so did Mrs. Davis.

But even though that moment was when we heard these words, they were already very familiar to each of us. And that's because we'd been living in the light of these words - here, in this place, in God's house.

You are holy, wonderful and blessed. These words were reflected in the faces of our leaders - going all the way back to the wonder of weeseekers. Reflected through pageants, camping trips, and Good Friday Services.

When you grow up believing these words, that's exactly how you feel - completely blessed. And you learn early on that the natural response to that feeling is to share it and give back - so we did - we gave back to the place that made us feel so loved and cherished. We became acolytes, ushers and readers, feeling connected and a part of a very special place. And as that feeling grew in us, we looked outside of our community to give back to our world - the world that now waits for us.

We felt the joy of service through the pain of the 30 Hour Famine - an experience so powerful that many of us came back for 6 years to do the famine. Mission trips to PA and NC opened our eyes and our hearts to people in need of help and hope - people not so different from us after all. Then came pilgrimage - a life-changing moment for all of us.

Pilgrimage was filled with God sightings, physical challenges, and spiritual moments that brought us closer to God and to each other. Being taken out of our church comfort zone and transported halfway across the country, we relied on each other, laughed together, and shared powerful moments filled with God's love. We may have been in unfamiliar territory, but we knew the feeling very well, because it was that same love that guided us on our journey from the beginning, starting right here, in this place. And it's that love that will support us as we step outside these doors into a waiting world - it's our turn to take the blessings that we have been given and share them with the world. We know how to do that - we've learned it here.

So now we take the next step, and we'll remember this:

Live without fear. Your Creator has made you holy, wonderful and blessed, has always protected you, and loves you as a parent. Go in peace to follow the good road - and may God's blessing be with all of us - always. Amen.