

Hello and good evening. My name is Mike Pasterick and I am a graduate of St. Ursula School, class of 1997. Many of you might know my mother Marilyn and step-father Bill Spohn, and my siblings Kim, Chris and Billy. We had a celebration recently at my parents' house as they sent their last tuition check to St. Ursula School after 22 years – I'm sure that many of you can appreciate THAT relief! But I'm here tonight to tell you why after all of those years, it really was their very best investment.

What is truly important about tonight is that we have an opportunity to join together to support St. Ursula School and all that it has given not just to my family, but many of yours as well. Our story is not unique – just a little longer than most (with a few exceptions –Even though I don't believe that they're here tonight, I'm looking at you Lamperski Family). The wonderful things that St. Ursula has brought to our lives could not happen without the support of so many people – so I'm here to speak for all of the alumni and students that can't be here tonight. Thank you Fr. Dorsey for your continued support and that of St. Ursula Parish. Thank you Sister Joanita for being the first one to school in the morning, the last to leave, and working tirelessly in between to provide us with a quality academic and spiritual education. Thank you to all of you parents, Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles and friends out there who happily purchase our shopping certificates, Market Day orders, lottery tickets, and our precious artwork just to name a few. In addition, thank you for your attendance and generosity this evening in contributing to this, the single largest fundraiser of the year. Lastly, as my little brother graduates – the last of our family to walk the halls of St. Ursula, I thank you Mom and Bill for giving us all so unselfishly the gift of our St. Ursula education.

A little about myself and my personal experiences - when I first came to St. Ursula in 1985, my Mom was a single mother working full time and scrimping and saving every penny to be able to afford what she considered to be the best and only choice for me – Catholic Education. I attended St. Ursula from Kindergarten through Eight Grade where I received what I consider to be a premium and personalized education. When subject matters were not difficult enough, the faculty catered my individual curriculum to be at a higher, more appropriate level. When subject matters presented a challenge, teachers like Mary Heyl would stay after school – giving up her free time to ensure that her students' educational needs were adequately met. I was able to place in to the highest academic track in Pine-Richland High School and can honestly say that I went in to programs as well prepared, if not more so than the top students coming from public middle-school. Novels that we were asked to read in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade had already been covered in unbelievable depth in Mrs. Readal's class. The German language introduction I had at St. Ursula allowed me to be the only student in high school my senior year to take an independent German 5 class. The unique challenges and opportunities presented at St. Ursula also led me to be extremely prepared for college. I graduated from Penn State with dual majors in Economics and German, and am now the Operations Director for a leading consulting company here in Pittsburgh.

Academics alone, however, were not the sole reason for St. Ursula's School's uniqueness; being exposed to individualized opportunities truly helped to shape many of the lives of the students who have attended the institution. Every student who has

attended this school was different – but every single one has had the opportunity to lead. Through sports teams, music programs, plays, forensics competitions, Science Olympiads, etc., every student is given the opportunity to find their voice and stand out in any variety of activities. I can speak from personal experience from my family's perspective that Kim, Chris, Billy and I are all very different people with unique strengths and weaknesses. Our experiences here built confidence, self esteem, and pushed us to thrive and excel in all endeavors. I was recently told a story about a girl in 4<sup>th</sup> grade who was handed a form to play basketball by Sister Joanita. This girl had no interest in the sport and was intimidated to take it up. "Here. Sign this. You're going to play basketball". That was the only option she was given at the time. This girl went on to get a full ride to college on a basketball scholarship. Without that unique opportunity, she might never have realized her potential.

The classroom atmosphere is yet another unique calling card of this school. Never in any classroom setting have I ever seen or heard of teachers who give so much to their students, not being rewarded by a big paycheck or promise of a cushy pension, but the pure satisfaction in knowing that they truly have made a difference in their students' lives. While I know that I already mentioned them before, Mary Heyl and Pat Readal are two prime examples (there are countless more, but these two have certainly stood the test of time!) Excellence in quality of education is one thing, but when you truly reach through to a student and impact their lives forever – that's a whole other achievement. I'll never forget something Mrs. Heyl once told me (and forgive me if I misquote you), "Everything you learn – no matter how big or small – goes in to you personal suitcase.

You never know when you'll need something from it, but the best part is that the more you learn, the more you will be prepared for anything that comes your way." I can safely say that I've had to reach in to the depths of that suitcase more times than I can count...lo and behold, she was right. Another experience that left an indelible mark on my, and countless students' sense of drive and motivation was this motion right here (*hamburger flipping motion*). Anyone know what this is? If you were taught by Pat Readal, you do. This is the motion of "you flipping hamburgers for a living because you didn't study for her test." While that may seem like a gross over reaction to the effects of failing to remember the capital city of Turkmenistan, it did drive the point home that if you want to achieve anything important in life, you have to work for it! This is a lesson that few students are challenged to learn on a day to day basis. Students of St. Ursula School are lucky to have teachers who prepare them for the rigors of life so completely.

Classrooms are not just teachers and books though, but also experiences. Because of the close-knit nature of the school we made great friends, many of whom are still friends to this day, learned much about cooperation, and shared unforgettable life experiences – but more importantly, the St. Ursula Classroom brought faith to its students. Catholicism has always been an important part of my family's life, and I truly believe that it is the foundation for why my family is so close. With shared values and moral direction, we have a bond that is bigger than any one of us individually. The students of St. Ursula School are lucky to have this bond reinforced within themselves and between each other. Personally, this bond has carried through with me to this day. As many of you probably have been at some point, I was recently asked to be the Godfather for my friends'

newborn. I didn't even bat an eye when accepting the request because I knew that I was prepared to aid in my Godson's spiritual growth. That preparation came from within the walls of this school.

Every parent is more than likely interested in the answer to one question over all others: "Will St. Ursula School prepare my child to be successful?" Success can of course be measured in a variety of ways, but I can tell you that every single graduate of St. Ursula School has come out of it with the following:

- Knowing what is important – it's not money, it's not power, it's not fame, it's not prestige. Every graduate of this school knows that hard work, faith and family are the keys to life. Everything else springs from concentrating on those three things.
- Conducting yourself with appropriateness in all situations – At St. Ursula you are taught that how you conduct yourself in various settings is a direct reflection of you and those you associate with. This is one life lesson that is worth its weight in gold.
- Dedication to work toward your true passion – Success and happiness mean doing something you enjoy. For example, I had a classmate who wanted nothing more than to take apart old computers during recess. Sister Joanita

allowed him to follow his interests. He is now a big-shot computer engineer working in Silicon Valley. I can't help but think it all started there.

- Never stop learning and work hard – The examples I gave from the teachers before should be proof enough for that, but this lesson was taught every day at St. Ursula. No graduate comes out of here having to “make this motion” – everything they need to succeed is already in their personal suitcase (see how nicely that fits together?)
- Communicate with people effectively – In a variety of ways, whether through class presentations, the Forensics team, class papers, school plays, or any number of other activities, effective communication skills are instilled in to every student. For example, I remember that my brother was terrified to speak or even STAND in front of large groups of people. Well, one day he was “obliged” to bring the gifts up during mass. After having to go through that ordeal, the sting was a little less painful every time. Now, and I say this with all sincerity, we can't shut him up, no matter HOW many people are around.
- Be honest and dependable – These are two hallmarks of a Catholic education, particularly one received at St. Ursula. Students here are constantly held accountable for the quality of their work, integrity in the classroom and between their peers, and instilled with the self assuring fact that they can be counted upon.

These qualities are why I can say without any reservation that you are already priming your children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews for success. It is important to understand the reasons why this school has touched so many lives. St. Ursula School has graduated doctors, nurses, non-profit fundraisers, corporate business leaders, teachers, entrepreneurs, and a host of other occupations; but what is most important is that the graduates leave these halls with not only the knowledge to excel, but the love and faith to direct that excellence toward the betterment of the world around them. Thank you all for your continued support, and God bless.