



Demetri Petrou

Grade 12

Bio: I am a member of the Church of the Annunciation in Cranston, RI. This fall, I will be majoring in biomedical engineering at URI. I also plan on participating in the honors program and studying abroad through one of URI's programs. Over the past two years I was a member of a performance outreach team called Salt and Light that spreads the message of the gospel to different groups like youth groups, food pantries, and nursing homes through songs, sketches, and more.

Scholarship Essay

Because of the pandemic, my faith has been impacted in several ways. During Holy Week this year, I especially felt the change in the way we worship. At the same time, I felt both a deeper focus and a disconnected feeling toward the services. My concentration on the hymns and prayers was stronger so that I could remain present in the worship, but the digital form of worship felt less genuine than other years. My whole family was able to "attend" most services, but there were more opportunities to be distracted as we faced a television screen. The time before and after Holy Week was also marked by these issues. I believe that the time away from the physical church building and Holy Communion has made me eager to return and appreciative of the ability to attend. In my personal life, quarantining for about two months has allowed me to grow and consider my priorities. Especially after Holy Week, I newly committed myself to deepening my relationship with Christ and setting that as my primary goal. Though the pandemic hindered the practice of my faith, I realize that God used it as a period of spiritual growth for me.

In general, the virus will leave lasting effects on the church as any global event does. All public establishments like our churches will need to uphold safety and sanitation measures like masks and six-foot distancing for the time being. One thing that is certain is our worship, sacraments, and tradition will remain the same as they have for so many centuries. What will be different is our interaction with each other as Christians. Love for others and fellowship are two core aspects of the Christian faith that are difficult to practice with the safety measures. Many may feel they are still disconnected from their church even being back in the physical building. How can this issue be addressed? Of course, we all pray a vaccine is released to the public in the near future. However, Isaiah 26:4 reminds us to "Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock." If we lay all our worries before Christ and trust in His care over us, He can give us peace. Our faith in God cannot solve the issues raised by the virus, but it does help

us get through them. This has been true for all Christians since Christ walked the Earth. In this uncertain time for the way we worship, the key is to remain strong in our faith toward God.