

I suppose that everyone here has a *general* idea of where they are going in life, how things are going to play out - at least to some extent. It's a path that you see ahead of you, leading to whatever future you're working towards. Personally, I kind of imagine it as a trail through the woods, you know, carefully marked, with a beautiful sunset at its end. Perhaps this is a hike that I've been planning for quite a while. Sometimes, though, things will happen that pull you off that path, and bring you... in another direction entirely. Imagine the trail becomes overgrown and you are forced off into the undergrowth. Suddenly, there's no path to follow.

Two years ago, I sustained a concussion while playing lacrosse - this was in the middle of the spring sports season, right before Children of Eden, right before Cabaret Night at Princeton High School. I was about to start my eagle scout project and the school year was basically ending. It's impossible for me to explain just how *well* things were going - even the WEATHER was amazing! I had a *lot* of activities and projects going on, and it all seemed to be going *just the way I wanted*. But like I said... that concussion happened.

I don't think I would be exaggerating in calling this a serious concussion. All light and noise were extremely painful to me - I couldn't do anything or I would get a headache. Actually, I would even get headaches when I *wasn't* doing anything, so you can imagine that I wasn't doing much back then. Those things I talked about before, the musical, the sports, my projects... I either missed them or put them on hold - every single one of them.

You probably wouldn't be surprised at this point if I told you that I was incredibly disappointed with my situation. Just imagine you couldn't do *anything* for a day besides lay in bed and think. Actually, it might not sound too bad. But imagine doing that for five months straight. This isn't to say that I was a vegetable, but I didn't exactly have much to do. When I tried to attend my friend's eagle scout court of honor, for example, I had to turn back when I was *halfway there* as a fire engine passed by, giving me a splitting headache - it was that bad. And now let us look back on our disrupted trail in the woods. All of a sudden... you're lost in the wilderness. It's pretty frightening not to know where you're going.

The thing is, there was *one* thing that the headache gave me, which was time. All of a sudden, I had literally *hours* to do nothing but think, which I certainly did a lot of, seeing how bored I got. Let me tell you, this is when I realized just *how much* support I had. My family, friends, you as congregation... I discovered that basically EVERYONE I knew was

there for me, praying for me or caring for me - extending God's love through their own kind words and actions. Wow, how that certainly changed things. I realized at that point that I had been blinded by myself - and I know it's weird to think of blindness when your eyes are functioning. But I had been so consumed with all of the things pertaining to *myself* that I really didn't consider much else. The concussion, as awful as I felt it was at time, helped me see outside of myself and... appreciate others. I'm going to really stretch this analogy I've been using and say it's as if I had been hiking through this trail only thinking of the destination, like I was so focused on myself and my goal that I couldn't see the sunlit flowers or wind through the trees. Or the other hikers who were trying to help me blaze a detour. I became aware of that which is *outside* of myself. I didn't feel quite so alone anymore, sitting in bed at home by myself. Through others, God was so clearly with me. In a way, I found myself more connected to the rest of the world even though this was the period of my life in which I had the least interaction with anyone.

Though I had a lot of trouble with my concussion, it made me able to see more clearly the things that *mattered*. I think that *perhaps* with contentment comes a complacency of thought - you don't really need to think quite so hard if everything is going the way you want. So in a way, my concussion wasn't *quite* so bad. Though I had been blind, it gave me a different kind of sight, and I hope that *you* may perhaps become more aware yourselves by listening to my story. If possible, I'd like you to stop for a second to think about those things you don't normally consider. Really *see* the beautiful sanctuary in which you now sit and remember why you are here. Think of what that word means, it's such a beautiful word. See the people around you. They are each individuals with their own thoughts, their own dreams and favorite ice creams. We all see the world in our own way, but I hope that you may all appreciate the deeper complexity of the world that a few minutes' consideration can bring. In being more aware, perhaps we may all better appreciate the workings of others in this world.