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The Secret Life of Schoolgirls

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The Secret Life of Schoolgirls

Abstract

Even as a Catholic, I hated Catholic school. I hated our uniforms. They were a horrible yellow and green, with skirts that felt like heavy curtains and shirts made of 2% cotton. On hot days the shirts would stick to your body and slowly creep up to your armpits every time you moved.

So forget that Catholic School girl fantasy because there's a lot of baggage that comes with those knee socks.
[*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, Catholic school, teaching religion, Catholicism

Disciplines

Catholic Studies | Curriculum and Social Inquiry | Education | Religion

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](http://www.gettysburg.edu) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

THE SECRET LIFE OF SCHOOLGIRLS

April 24, 2013

(The following is a real conversation)

“So... you were a Catholic School girl.”

“Yes.”

“Did you wear a uniform?”

“Yes.”

-eye brow raise-

“It’s not what you think.”

“You sure?”

Even as a Catholic, I hated Catholic school. I hated our uniforms. They were a horrible yellow and green, with skirts that felt like heavy curtains and shirts made of 2% cotton. On hot days the shirts would stick to your body and slowly creep up to your armpits every time you moved.

So forget that Catholic School girl fantasy because there’s a lot of baggage that comes with those knee socks.

I attended two Catholic schools, the first from kindergarten to 8th grade, and I remember a lot. Kids crying in first grade because they loved their parents more than God and were afraid they were going to hell, non-existent sex-ed until the 8th grade (then masked as “Family Life”), teachers scolding kids for flipping to the dirty bits in the Old Testament instead of paying attention to the parable of the day, dressing up as saints for school performances and talked about the brutal ways we were martyred, and the Religion classes consisting of textbook study and tests, making faith academic and gradable.



And, of course, the one Albanian boy played Jesus for the school's production of the Passion for three years because he looked more legit than the average freckled Irish boy that attended the school.

As an eight year old I was worrying about homework and hell all at once.

It wasn't an ideal elementary school education.

High school was better – it was Jesuit. A lot of us have now heard about the Jesuits because the new Pope is Jesuit. Jesuits are a liberal sect of Catholicism with a primary focus on education and service. They use terms like “preferential option for the poor” and “men and women for others”. This religion, that for my whole life boarded on oppressive, suddenly was mixing with theories that made sense to me. I was fortunate; therefore I was obliged to give back. I quickly became immersed in the service aspect of my high school, doing every immersion trip I could. It was a breath of fresh air.

And it inspired me to act.

It made me apply for the Center for Public Service at Gettysburg, work at NGOs for summer internships, and in general always try to recognize that people are people. From the Jesuit teachings of faith and reflectiveness I was able to take away the core understandings that I could have been anyone, and I would like if someone gave me a meal if I was hungry or a pair of socks if my feet were cold. As a graduating member of Gettysburg Campus Kitchens, I have tried to figure out what people need, and even though I remove my work from my church, I don't think I could have got to this point this without religion.

I'll admit I don't have all the answers, and that I am nowhere close to reaching enlightenment. I admit that, yes, some of the stereotypes about us are true and, yes, I've even experienced them. I'll also admit that while I don't consider myself a good Catholic (and my old-school grandparents would agree), I also don't hesitate to admit that I am one, and that those experiences have had an impact on what I like to do.

So my concept of religion is not what “they” make you say or make you wear; it is how you live it, and if you read between the lines in the Bible or the Koran, that idea is there.

You just have to look for it.

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<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2013/04/24/the-secret-life-of-schoolgirls/>