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Honorable Mention Essay - ENGL 1000 Literacy Autobiography Contest 2018

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Eunis Lukose

Professor White

Literacy Narrative Contest

For many people, writing personal essays about themselves tends to be easier because no one knows you better than yourself. For me on the other hand, personal essays are usually more difficult because I must think back to a specific event or events and write about that experience in three pages when, in reality, I could verbally tell the story to someone in a few sentences.

When first introduced to the literacy narrative, the immediate topic that came to mind was that of becoming more literate in religion through the reading the Bible. As I began writing, I really didn't know how I was supposed to express such a personal experience to those who had not undergone a similar encounter. The only thing I could think of doing was to attempt and describe it to my readers through as much imagery and detail as I could write. Once I finished my first draft I sent it to Professor White to read over. Once she read it over, she expressed that she thought I could crack into my experience a little more. In all honestly, I didn't know how much more I could crack into this experience. How do you help readers experience an event that is so intimate? Determined, I went back, sat down and thought about how I could expand on certain events. Eventually, ideas started popping into my head and I began incorporating them into the paper. In the end, though it was a difficult process to put such an event into words, I wrote a paper that is probably one of my favorite papers yet.

I will not be available to present on GSU research day.

The Day J.C. Gave me his Word

I could feel him watching me. He was keeping track of everything I did. He knew about every good, bad, and unnecessary decision I have ever made. He tried to keep me out of trouble, but I wouldn't listen. I never paid enough attention to him to realize he was just trying to protect me. Then one day, my life changed forever.

For those that know me, they know I'm a professional "worrier". I worry about the smallest things, particularly when it relates to my future. Therefore, it was no surprise that one month into my junior year of high school I was having mini earthquakes inside me shattering every single speck of hope I had. At first, it was constant fear about the ACT. I truly believed I would not get the score I desired to obtain in order to be accepted into the schools I wanted to get into. Sure enough, three ACT's later I did not receive my desired score, just as I had anticipated. The ACT sparked a series of worries inside me. *Oh my gosh! I'm not going to get into any of my top schools, I won't receive any scholarships, I'm going to be floating in a sea of debt after graduating, I won't find a decent job after college, I won't get married!* My head was full of an endless whirlwind of worries. In other words, I was a mess. And to make things better, my parents just had to decide to send me to a church retreat amidst all the chaos that was happening.

The weekend of the retreat finally came, and I reluctantly went into the church hall. I sat down with my arms crossed over my chest with an "I don't want to be here right now" expression spread across my face. I knew J.C. was in that very room watching my entire body become immersed in my disappointment, but I didn't dare to glance up and look him in the eyes. Ten minutes later, the retreat leader walked into the hall and questioned, "How many of you are here today because your parents forced you to come?" I, being my stubborn self, didn't want her to judge me so I didn't raise my hand. Although, in my head I thought, *that's the only reason I'm*

here right now. Then she announced, “No one forced you to come here, but rather it was God’s plan for you to be here today.” She recited a Bible verse that did something to me I couldn’t explain. She said, “For Jeremiah 29:11 states ‘For I know well the plans I have in mind for you- oracle of the Lord- plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope’” (*The New American Bible Revised Edition*). Those words caused the little crevices inside my eyes to form tiny lakes which quickly began to flood over my bottom eyelashes, creating two tiny waterfalls that streamed down my face. As my ears took in each word of this bible verse, my heart that had built a wall of unwillingness to truly let God’s words penetrate it slowly began to come down. “For I know well the plans I have in mind for you”-boom, “plans for your welfare and not for woe”-boom, “so as to give you a future of hope” –BOOM (*The New American Bible Revised Edition*, Jeremiah 29:11). With those last words the wall was completely torn down and my whole heart became exposed. It was vulnerable. It was at that moment, I decided that maybe J.C. was part of this plan that God had for me, so I wiped away the waterfalls and for the first time, looked J.C. directly in the eyes and he was staring right back. His eyes were caressing me with all the love he had to offer. Immediately, I felt this peace wash over me from head to toe. All my worries that were weighing me down were suddenly lifted from my shoulders. It was at this moment I decided I was going to give him a chance.

The months following the retreat were a learning process. Once I made the decision to let J.C. into my life, I didn’t know just how much dedication I needed to put in. Becoming stronger in faith is not as easy as it seems. I tried to talk to J.C. on a daily basis, but instead found myself going to him only during times I truly needed something. I went to him when I wanted an “A” on an exam. I went to him when I was having a stressful day. I went to him when I had a fight with my parents. I went to him when I felt alone. I guess you could say I was “using” him. Then one

day, a crimson paperback book with jet black writing caught my eye and he pulled me towards it making me hold it in my hands. He told me the Bible was the manual to living my life and contained all the solutions to my problems. When I needed protection, I found myself opening up to Psalm 91 because I have the Lord for my refuge and he commands his angels to guard me wherever I go. When I needed someone to trust, I read Wisdom of Ben Sira 2 for it says, “You that fear the Lord, trust in him and your reward will not be lost.” When I need the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I read Acts of the Apostles 2 for it says “Then appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. When I need reassurance, I read Philipines 4:19 for I know my God will fully supply whatever I need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. When I need confidence, I read Philipines 4:13 for “I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me”. When I feel alone, I read Isaiah 43 which says, “I have called you by name: you are mine” (*The New American Bible Revised Edition*). Soon enough, I found myself going to thank J.C. for providing me with an “A” on an exam, making my stressful day more manageable, resolving problems with my parents, and being there for me when I was in need of a friend. The Bible made it easier to talk to J.C. during both good and bad times.

I cannot say that my faith is perfect, nor is my relationship with J.C. I must stop and remind myself of Jerimiah 29:11. I stop and remind myself that God provided Christians with a manual on how to live life. All the answers to questions can be found within the seventy three books contained in the Holy Bible. I stop and remind myself that God provided my brothers and sisters with a sacred text that withheld the test of time for thousands of years. So many years that this ancient book has been translated in over six hundred different languages. In John Chapter 1

verse 1 it says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (*The New American Bible Revised Edition*). Jesus Christ may not physically be present in this world anymore, but God, our father, has given my brothers and sisters and I his Word and through this word Jesus Christ lives and breathes. He may not provide me with everything when I want it because he knows exactly when I’ll need it. My faith started out small like a mustard seed, but it is only beginning to grow. There is one thing, however, that keeps growing and that is Christ’s love for me. In 1 Corinthians it says his love is patient, his love is kind. It is not jealous; his love is not pompous. It is not inflated. It is not quick-tempered. His love never fails. It is unconditional, but more importantly his love is eternal (*The New American Bible Revised Edition*).

Works cited

The Bible. The New American Bible Revised Edition, Catholic Book Publishing Corp., 2011