
Youth Sunday Sermon by John Czabala

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In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Good morning everybody. My name is John Czabala. I'll be giving the first part of this sermon. I'm a senior at North Atlanta High School and next year I'll be attending Clemson University.

Over the course of my high school career, I've had many ups and downs, but one thing that has unfortunately burdened me was the loss of three grandparents. This is something that I struggled with throughout high school, despite me not expressing many negative emotions. It was still something that was very difficult for me to endure. It's been the hardest thing for me in my life.

I'd begun to lose my way, it began to affect school and work and even my own faith. I had thought to myself, "How could this happen to a young, shy, and, well, dashing handsome guy as myself?" It was very difficult for me and it negatively affected me in many aspects of my life.

However, this isn't where my story begins. My story begins this past August, actually, when my senior year kicked off, and I'd begun mentally preparing myself to finish off high school and to get into college. It was exciting but also a little frightening at the same time.

It all began when I started attending different youth activities here at the Cathedral. It started with a Bible study on Tuesday nights. I was really kind of unsure whether or not I should attend this Bible study in August; however, I think my desire for pizza outweighed my uncertainties.

From there on, I was attending just about everything available to me as a youth. I attended church; I mean I've been acolyting here for quite a while. I signed up for retreats and other activities, and I was even asked to be on the Youth Leadership Team, which was definitely something that was important to me.

One afternoon in February as my sister and I were driving home (and I know she's looking over at me not really wanting me to say this), she approached me and said, "Wow, you've really become a Jesus child these past couple of months!"

That got me thinking a lot about what she really meant, and as I thought about it, I don't really know what that means. After a while, I realized two things, however. All the friends I've made at the Cathedral this past year have helped me to discover my own faith. I started having faith in myself to do good and to succeed. I started having faith in my family and others knowing that they will be there to love and support me forever, throughout college, and into my adult life. I found faith in God as well. I realized that he, too, will always be there to guide me through my life.

The second thing I realized was that the pain of losing these three grandparents wasn't so painful anymore. This past year really helped me to overcome some of this pain. Jesus said, "Abide in my love." This is something that I've been teaching myself every day, but what does this exactly mean? Abide in my love? I didn't quite understand it. What does he mean by this? This phrase that was just thrown around so much has to mean something, right? He doesn't want us to physically...

hold on a second... this is exactly when it hit me! I had figured it out!

Jesus's love exists within all of us, but it is our job to bring it out. It is our job as friends and family to show each other the love inside us all. Jesus appointed us to bear fruit that is long lasting. He means for us to build bonds with each other with the love he has given us that will never break. And this is a good thing.

This Cathedral and the people here have showed me love and friendship, and this is also a good thing. I have strengthened my faith and begun to overcome this pain, and this is good.

I know right now that I have three grandparents in heaven who are smiling upon me as I tell my story to a roomful of friends and family, who all love me. As I look at their faces, I can see that they're very proud of me. My journey through faith and love has been a rocky one, but really began because on a Tuesday night in August, I really wanted some pepperoni pizza.

Amen.