

Alumni Saint Spotlight



John W. Foster (BC 2012) is a U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Officer, commonly known as a diplomat. A career in the Foreign Service is global and requires me and my colleagues to be worldwide available, ready to meet the needs of the State Department. Typically, each Foreign Service assignment is for two to three years in a designated country, working out of a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. For my first overseas tour, I will be heading to Port-au-Prince, Haiti for an Economic assignment where I will be looking for ways to build and maintain positive economic and trade relations between the U.S. and Haiti. In order to best prepare for this assignment, I am currently in professional training learning more about the history, politics, economics and religion of Haiti, the region as well as a full-time language student learning French and Haitian Creole. I expect to arrive in Port-au-Prince May 2021.

How do you feel your education from Central Catholic helped get you where you are today?

Community. Community. Community. I cannot express my gratitude and appreciation for my CC/BC community that has turned into family. I credit my family, theology teachers, and school chaplains for instilling in me the importance and necessity of service. I vividly recall a conversation with Fr. Tom Bortz, where he directly asked, "John, what is it that you want to do with your life?" I thought this was Fr. Tom's way of recruiting me for the Diocese, but rather it was an invitation to truly ponder how I could use my God-given talents to the best of my ability. Conversations such as these were quite common with CC/BC faculty and staff. When I fondly think back about my time at Central and Berks Catholic, I think of the quote: "The best teachers are those who show you where to look, but don't tell you what to see." There was never a singular moment that put me on my current path but rather it was the moral grounding in my Sacraments and Social Justice religion classes; it was the Social Studies and World History courses; and the unconditional love and support from the CC/BC family to truly go out into the world and make a difference. As if it was divine providence, one of my last conversations at BC prior to graduation was with Mr. Rick Lanciano, who said, "St. Catherine of Siena had it right when she said, 'Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.'"

What advice would you give to current Berks Catholic students?

When I was a senior at Berks Catholic, I was convinced that I wanted to be an Accountant. 8 years later, I'm far removed from Accounting! I have to say, be open to wherever God is calling you. Never and I truly mean this, never did I think I would become a U.S. diplomat. Take the time to explore all that is out there. It wasn't until my junior year of college that I took my first international flight. Now I can tell you my favorite international airports! Whatever you do, do it with passion and be at peace. Often times, we get caught up in the comparison trap and look at what others are doing with their lives. It's a false equivalence. Do what YOU love and what brings you passion cause ultimately that's what we all want: a career or profession that brings you happiness, fulfillment, but also holiness.



Lastly, but most importantly - it's OK to not know what you want to do post-BC. The onus is on you to reach out to faculty, staff, and even alumni to explore your career possibilities. You've read how the faculty and staff at CC/HN/BC have had a huge and positive impact on me. When I would spend time in the BC Chapel, I often would pray, and continue to pray the following questions: "Who am I, Where am I going, and How do I plan on getting there?" Ask yourself these questions, wrestle with it, then turn to God for direction and guidance.

One last quote for good measure - on my desk is an Arabic phrase that says, "Be at peace, not in pieces." Discern, reflect, and go out and make a difference in our world. We need you.

Tell us a little bit about yourself and what you like to do in your spare time.

I am a graduate of Duquesne University where I majored in History and International Relations with concentrations in Security Studies and U.S. Foreign Policy. After graduation, I began working at the State Department as a contractor and served as the Program Support Specialist for the Ambassadorial Seminar. Most recently, I served as a Regional Coordinator in the State Department's Office of Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism, primarily travelling to Africa and Southeast Asia. In 2018, I was selected as a State Department Rangel Fellow and began my Masters of Arts in Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University's Fletcher School, with specialties in International Security Studies and International Political Economy. Last summer, I served at the U.S. Mission to NATO in Brussels, Belgium. In November, I married Julianna Twigg, a mental health therapist. Accompanying Julianna and I on our Foreign Service adventure are our two pets: Charlie the Diplocat and Lincoln the Diplopup! You can always find me with a good book!

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