

Alexandra Kolaya

Raphael Maria Bastian Memorial Scholarship Application

*“Your example, more than your words, will be an eloquent lesson to the world.” - St. Madeleine*

*Sophie Barat*

For as long as I can remember, this quote hung on a pale pink canvas print in my bedroom. My mother hung it there when my sister and I were small, and it was the first thing I saw every morning. At six-years-old, I doubt I understood what the word “eloquent” meant, much less how someone’s life could serve as a lesson, but the sentiment stuck regardless.

I contemplated for a non-insignificant amount of time how to articulate how my Sacred Heart education has shaped me. The short answer is in every single way. The long answer is an all-encompassing narrative that would likely test the patience of even the most dedicated reader. So, for the sake of my sanity and whoever has been subjected to read this, I will try my best to be succinct.

I come from a long line of Sacred Heart women, each one a role model in their own way. My great-grandmother, quite possibly one of the coolest women I have ever met, attended a Sacred Heart School in Cuba. My mother and her two sisters were Carrollton girls. I followed in their footsteps fourteen years ago, a three-year-old mess of curly pigtails and chubby cheeks. Since then, I haven’t just grown out of my polos and plaid skirts; I have grown into a person. Carrollton didn’t just provide a pretty backdrop for my adolescence; it was the impetus for my personality, my sense of humor, and my moral compass.

For a while, I struggled with my faith. As someone who prizes logic and evidence, I found it unfathomable that some things simply couldn’t be explained. I didn’t like not having all the answers. I wanted certainty and proof. This began to change when I became close with my now-best friends. In them, I encountered a kind of love and goodness that felt too profound to be coincidental.

I think the place this became the most apparent to me was my Junior Kairos retreat. I let myself be vulnerable, and was met with empathy and understanding in return. I felt such an overwhelming feeling of love and gratitude in the community. One moment we were crying together, the next, crowded around a tiny laptop screen, jumping on chairs, ecstatic as the UM Hurricanes won the playoff quarter-finals. In those moments, I began to really see God in places I hadn't before. I have come to understand faith not as an explanation, but a trust in a love that is unconditional and universal, one that affirms the dignity of every person.

In a world that often fails to recognize that dignity, I believe it is more important than ever to lead with compassion. I carry the conviction that real change only comes through a love that is both deep and informed. I have found that this dedication to understanding others has, in turn, fueled my own inner life.

My intellectual identity is perhaps the greatest gift I have received here at Carrollton. I truly love learning, not as a means to an end, but as something valuable in itself. This love was especially nurtured in my English and history classes, where I learned that the pursuit of knowledge is hollow if it is not used to advocate for others. A Sacred Heart education is not a passive experience; it requires a reciprocal relationship. In that spirit, I have sought to give back to the community that shaped me.

Since eighth-grade, I have had the opportunity to be a Student Ambassador. This role has given me the meaningful chance to display the place I love with others, not just as an institution, but a lived experience. In those moments, I am trying to embody Carrollton. I want prospective families to see, in the way I speak and carry myself, the kind of student this community forms.

I have also strived to contribute to our intellectual and creative life through our school publications. As the President-elect of our Model UN team, I hope to foster that same spirit of "informed love" and global awareness in my peers. I want to ensure that every girl at Carrollton feels she has the tools to be a leader who leads with compassion.

Ultimately, I hope that my fourteen years here have been, in some small way, an eloquent lesson of my own. A lesson of love, advocacy, and a pink canvas print's worth of wisdom that I am finally old enough to understand.