

## Italy's Testimony

My parents have been bringing me to Redeemer since I was a baby. I went to school here most of my life. I had to leave in 2nd grade, because I needed a school nurse for my blood disorder called ITP. I got better after a while and I came back in 6th grade, which was when I started to participate in youth group. Youth has had a big impact on me throughout the years and I have so much to say about how it has helped me through my faith journey, but I will keep everything simple.

At first I didn't want to get confirmed, mostly because I didn't think it would be worth it if I wasn't showing up at church often. I also struggled with my faith journey due to a medical disorder I had when I was young. Because of it I wasn't allowed to participate in a lot of physical activities. If I took one dodgeball to the head I was at risk of death. I was in a really dark place and felt as if no light could reach me. This led me further from God. I thought He was punishing me for something I never did.

I struggled with belief for around 4 years of my life. Then Hannah Hayden decided to come and be our DCE at church and school. She had invited me to participate in youth, and I was in remission by then and I didn't have to worry about getting hurt, so I thought, "Why not"? I knew I wasn't going to youth for the Bible Study portion, but I went to have fun with my friends and socialize.

I believed this until I was around 12 and in 7th grade, when I realized that God had been the one to cure me of ITP. Everyone in church was praying for me and supporting me. When 8th grade rolled around I was way more confident to speak in youth and participate in the Bible Study portion. It was time to make the decision if I wanted to get confirmed or not and I decided not to because I hadn't been going to church that often, even though I was active in youth programs.

The summer after 8th grade was the National Youth Gathering and it had a big impact on me. Around 24,000 people from around the United States came and all met in one place to praise our God. It was a joyful and glorious time and we all had something amazing to take home from it.

Freshman year came and I regretted not getting confirmed because I started spending so much time at church. I was singing with the praise band and it still brings me so much joy that I can't describe. That summer we went to Camp Okoboji, a place where so many different people come to share their love for Jesus. But when it came time to take communion on Sunday for church, the people that were not confirmed went to go talk to the pastor and share that they

also believed. I took communion, but realized that I was strong in my faith and wanted to share what I believed through confirmation.

So I am here now telling my church what I have wanted to say for a long time. I would like to point out a few people that have helped me through my journey:

My mom because she still talked to me about God and read daily Bible verses to me everyday. She told me stories of her going to youth when she was young, even though my faith was failing at the time.

My dad because he would play Christian songs in the car, and even though I wasn't strong in my faith they were my favorite songs to belt my heart out to.

My brother for making me laugh in the toughest times.

My grandmas for being there when my parents couldn't be, or when they were busy.

Felicia Lindeman for always making me laugh whenever she's around.

Pastor Sippy because he baptized me and every time I see him he tells me he loves me and brings a smile to my face.

Marilyn with her amazing cooking and deep prayers at the end of the day.

And all the other adults who have spent countless hours with the youth.

Thank you to the youth group I have learned to love and enjoy spending time with.

And last but most certainly not least, my own Hannah Hayden, for pushing me further in my faith and bringing me back to God. These people have all been in my life for a very long time and I'm grateful for all of them.

My confirmation verse is not a long one but has deep meaning to me. John 1:5 says, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." I picked this verse because the light never went out in me and it shall not in the future because I have God and all of the church watching over me and I know for a fact that this light is shining brighter than ever.