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AASH Essay

The 2020-2021 year has been filled with challenges that have taken us all by surprise. In the past decades, others have also seen our world's tragedies in their lifetime and have overcome them by using qualities such as courage and confidence, qualities we find ourselves in need of today. Courage and confidence are qualities that also require strength. To have courage and confidence in not just yourself but your actions as well is an example of this strength. When St. Madeleine Sophie Barat began the society of the Sacred Heart, she needed to have an enormous amount of confidence in what she was starting because she knew that it would require many risks, sacrifices, and even the rest of her life. When St. Rose Philippine Duchesne first brought the Society of the Sacred Heart to America, she needed to also have a large amount of confidence in her bold decision, for just like Madeleine she was also risking so much, including not even being able to see her homeland ever again! In addition, these women and their country were just rising up out of the French Revolution, and were living in one of the most scary, difficult time periods in history. A time period where if you did not have courage then you were in very high risk of harm. However they did not give into fear, despite the terrifying times, St. Madeleine and St. Philippine did everything in their power to help others and follow the word of God. They showed the world how to use courage and confidence as a change agent to help others, ourselves and our world persist and have strength.

Today we see our world as a crumbling planet that is almost at its so-called "breaking point." We are convinced that this pandemic has made our lives tragic and that we'll never be the same when this passes. What we don't realize when we complain or become afraid about the challenges of our time period, is that our world has been through too much to call this "the end." The people that experienced these unfortunate and traumatic events of our Earth's past became very persistent, wise, and strong. For example, in 1792 the convent that St. Philippine Duchesne attended, (the Visitation Sisters) closed down due to the French Revolution, along with every other church and convent in France at the time. Instead of feeling sorry for herself or complaining about the misfortunes of her life (something we find ourselves doing very often today) she made the decision to devote herself for the next twelve years of her life to help others rise back out of their sorrow from recent events and continue living their lives. This was a very caring decision that St. Philippine made; she saved many lives and introduced many people to the path of God as well. She would not have made this decision or helped as many people as she did without being persistent, wise, and very strong.

Today, we find our world facing many similar challenges that St. Philippine and St. Madeleine lived through. They both were following God's path for themselves and trying to influence the world around them with their actions, while also facing many health issues along the way. Actually, it was St. Philippine's poor health that killed her at age eighty-three. The pandemic has certainly hit us all hard, but we have the past to relate to and learn from. I think that it is easy to say that in both times, people live in fear, worried that death lurks around the

corner. They both have accomplished and done so much for our world and I believe that the Society of the Sacred Heart greatly proves and reflects on their accomplishments.

Our patron Saints didn't just require great achievements for me and many other girls to attend Sacred Heart schools, calling us to use the excellent education we have to be forced for good in the world, but also possessed impelling qualities. The qualities they embody are courage and confidence. When Madeleine and Philippine were still establishing and working in the Sacred Heart Society, they didn't just have Faith in God, but also had Faith in themselves. If they didn't, then I am positive that today the Society of the Sacred Heart would be very different or maybe not even exist! True, they didn't always have the courage and confidence they required. In truth, Philippine had a large sense of self doubt and often considered herself a failure, yet many other people both today and in her time praise her for her hard work and accomplishments. St. Madeleine most certainly also faced self doubt and discrimination very often when establishing the Society of the Sacred Heart. Yet it was also St. Madeleine who said: "Courage and confidence! I cannot repeat this war-cry too often. We should make it our support in our life of conflict." Maybe in some ways this self doubt benefited and pushed Madeleine and Philippine to work harder, but Madeleine's own words imply that these qualities don't eliminate struggle, only enable you to bear it. This inevitability of struggle is why it was so important for them to be courageous and confident when facing the hardships of their lives. We must also be courageous and confident so we can move forward with our lives and surpass this pandemic.

In relation to courage and confidence, I believe that due to our world's recent failures and downfalls, we have all gained a sense of self doubt. For the past year, everyone in my life seems to be telling me that I need more confidence, that I don't have enough and that it's getting me nowhere. However, within the past year I have also repeatedly asked myself, "Do I truly deserve to have confidence?" The question seems like it's constantly playing on loop in my head. Every time I seem to have any pride, the question buries it and does not let me regain my pride. Maybe I do this out of fear of my pride becoming arrogance, yet deep inside I know there is a difference between the two. Pride is positive and generous, arrogance is negative and greedy. Great leaders are proud; tyrants are arrogant. Sometimes my self doubt pushes me to work harder like St. Philippine and St. Madeleine, but also like them, it pulls me down as well. Something that I have realized recently is that pride and courage is not a matter of deserving, it's whether we choose to use it for love and the right cause. For instance, when Jesus went up on that cross he did it knowing that no one deserved to go through what he went through but he did it anyway because he loves us. He loves us and he forgives us. His actions have inspired us as Christians to be better versions of ourselves, it's what inspired St. Madeleine and St. Philippine to create the Society of the Sacred Heart--not because they deserved to, or we deserve such a society today, but because it was and is a matter of love. Therefore, how can I help my own society regain courage and confidence during these difficult times when I can't even accept courage and confidence myself because I see it as a matter of deserving? I believe that if I can gain courage and confidence then I will be able to use it for the good of others and myself. Courage and confidence is what I must have to put my "Heart in Motion."

In conclusion, the recent downfalls, failures, and tragedies of our time, whether they are considered nothing or an improvement compared to our world's past, we must continue using the good methods and aspects of ourselves to push through them. It might be through the actions of holding our heads tall and playing a big role in leading the millions of people

fighting through this pandemic, or just giving our friends advice or words of encouragement. We can all help. When St. Madeleine and St. Philippine were creating the Society of the Sacred Heart, they did it not only create the society so they could just help their own time, they created it so their dreams can be fulfilled in our present time. They have inspired me and many other Sacred Heart Students to work hard and to make their hard work pay off. They have also inspired me to have courage and confidence so I can follow the path God has given me and accomplish my dreams with my head held high. God willing, I believe that if we as a society, can have strength, gratitude, hope, courage, and confidence, then we all can follow God's path for us, and gain a brighter future