



Charmagne Tessmer
Class of 2008

When I think about my spiritual journey, it started when I was a little kid. My grandma would take me to church and tell me stories from the bible while we made cookies. Looking back, I realize how clever my grandma was. I doubt there is a better way to get a kid to love Jesus than to associate Him with sugar. The right people and opportunities have always presented themselves along the path of spiritual development. It started with my grandma and continued with service opportunities, mass, mentors, and retreats.

My Companion's group was exactly what I needed when I came to St. Ben's. I had my life planned out and I knew everything. As you might imagine, it didn't take me long to realize I was dead wrong. Many of my foundations were shaken during my time in college but my group was there every month to listen. I can't express what a wonderful thing it is to be able to share your life with other great women in the context of God and spirituality. The women in my group are amazing, beautiful people and they inspire me so much. I owe a lot of who I am today to the questions they've challenged me with and the support they've offered.

My time here at CSB, including that with my journey group, has helped to ground me in what I believe and what I want for my future. I can't thank these women enough for the impact they've had on my personal and spiritual development. I've grown a great deal and will continue to change and work toward becoming the best version of myself. As I continue the next phase of my journey away from St. Ben's, I will always hold in my heart the things I've learned from this opportunity about myself and my purpose in life, companionship, the power of listening, and spirituality. I leave you with this poem about friendship because it describes the friendship I have found in my journey group and with my classmates at CSB.

"Portrait of a Friend"

I can't give solutions to all of life's problems, doubts,
or fears. But I can listen to you, and together we will
search for answers.

I can't change your past with all its heartache and pain,
nor the future with its untold stories.
But I can be there now when you need me to care.

I can't keep your feet from stumbling.
I can only offer my hand that you may grasp it and not fall.

Your joys, triumphs, successes, and happiness are not mine;
Yet I can share in your laughter.

Your decisions in life are not mine to make, nor to judge;
I can only support you, encourage you,
and help you when you ask.

I can't prevent you from falling away from friendship,
from your values, from me.
I can only pray for you, talk to you, and wait for you.

I can't give you boundaries which I have determined for you,
But I can give you the room to change, room to grow,
room to be yourself.

I can't keep your heart from breaking and hurting,
But I can cry with you and help you pick up the pieces
and put them back in place.

I can't tell you who you are.
I can only love you and be your friend.

--Unknown