

JMJ

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Language Arts

May 2011
Class 8 - 1
Essay

When asked who most inspired my faith, the answer is simple ... my great-grandmother. "Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies." This quote by Mother Teresa certainly reminds me of my great-grandmother. Nanny wanted to be the best person she could be rather than emulate to be someone else. I feel privileged to have had more than one spiritual role model in my life and relationship with Jesus Christ.

In July of 1997, I was born into this world. It was the same year that my great-grandmother, Margit "Nanny" Odegard, turned 90 years old. Ever since then, she had been a major force in my upbringing. Nanny taught me to live a respectable life, the importance of a good education, and to cherish the times that my family spends together. She had strong faith in God and believed that everything happened for a positive reason. Throughout the subsequent eight years, I was blessed to have spent a significant amount of time with her and learned many values from her.

Nanny was born in Norway and came to the United States when she was 18 years old. A farm girl, she had little formal education, and worked as a household servant. Nan always worked for successful people who encouraged her to work harder and achieve her dreams. She was a mix of humility, boldness, and gentleness. She struggled with writing and speaking the English language. Nanny did not have friends or family in the U.S.; however, she showed great courage and faith. Eventually, she met and married Torval Odegard and together they raised a family of three children.

Her home was always a place in which I wanted to be. Nanny had an uplifting spirit, and I realized that the many health and financial burdens she faced never discouraged her. By her example, she was a vital influence as to how I live my life.

Nan read the Bible and said that Jesus Christ was her inspiration and did so many things for her including dying on the cross. She would say, "I'm who I am, and do what I do all thanks to Him."

When Nan passed away, I knew I would miss her, but thought about how happy she would be in heaven. It was the perfect time to delve into my faith. Since my faith is solid, I have no doubt that I will see her again someday. This made the separation easier to bear. My family and I often talk about Nan and celebrate her life. Realizing the lasting impact she has had inspires me to make a difference with my own life.

I believe that if I could be half the person Nan was, I would be a great person. Nan never realized how everything she said to me affected me in such a profound way. She taught me so many things that I will keep and, hopefully, pass down to my own family one day. If I can influence someone in a positive way, I will know then that I am a successful person.

A woman of strength, beauty, patience, and kindness; these words come to mind when thinking of Nanny. Without her unique support, I never would have developed such a passion for understanding the world around me. My great-grandmother truly has been a large influence on my life and faith.

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Nan stressed that I should treat people the way I want to be treated. As a child, she taught me right from wrong. I guess you could say that many people have influenced my life, such as my parents and my teachers. We are constantly being shaped by our environment.

My great-grandmother walks beside me every day. I will always remember that she spoke about being faithful to our values. Nan said she always looked for the best in people. Hopefully, these lessons will take me a long way in life. She inspired me to pursue my dreams, to grow, and to become a little better in some way.