

## **St. Ignatius Benefit Speech - Louis Hurtado (May 7th, 2018)**

Good evening all and welcome. Thank you for coming out to support St. Ignatius School tonight. My name is Louis Hurtado and I am a St. Ignatius alum from the class of 2011. I am also a 2015 graduate from Fordham Prep and am currently a rising senior studying Math and Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts.

When I began to reflect on my experience from St. Ignatius School and how it has impacted my life, the biggest thing that came to my mind was empowerment. Being a 10-year-old from a low socioeconomic background in a community known for crime and violence, I never understood that there was more in the world or there was a place for me to make my dreams a reality. Looking back at my time with one year left till I graduate from college, I can say for certain that St. Ignatius has empowered me to strive to become who I want to be, not only for myself, but also for others. Throughout my time at St. Ignatius, the many Jesuit values instilled in me such as Magis, being open to growth, loving, and being a man for and with others is something I would not have learned without the school.

Growing up, my mother worked extremely hard to provide my brothers and I with everything we needed. Working two jobs most of her life, she wanted the best for us at any given moment. Although sometimes she could not provide the physical things we wanted, she never stopped providing us the gift of education. She would always push us to utilize the teachers from St. Ignatius and the network of people outside of it. The special thing about the school is that they support not only students but the entire family as well. While I was there my mom knew all the teachers and administrators, something that is rarely seen at any other place. This created a sense of a deeper community where they knew me and understood my family history. I wasn't just a student to the school but they saw me as a whole person with goals, achievements and challenges, and more.

At Holy Cross, I am proud to be a student leader in many facets. I am the Co-President of the Latin American Student Organization, a Peer Mentor in a mentoring program for first-year students, a Peer Career Assistant in the Center for Career Development which is essentially a student advisory role to help other students with resumes, cover letters, and internship searches, I am also a student ambassador in one of the committees of the Holy Cross Alumni Association, and I am the Chair of the Student Advisory Council for the Department of Math and Computer Science. Next year I will be continuing these roles along with becoming the Treasurer of the Student Government Association. I have also been a former Resident Assistant and a former thrower on the men's track and field team. This summer I will be living in Atlanta, GA where I will be an intern for General Electric in their Financial Management Program for the second summer in a row where I hope to pursue a career in Financial Services after graduation.

I cannot think about everything I just listed without the help of St. Ignatius. It provided me with something that many people in this country and many parts of the world do not have access too, which are opportunities for education and growth. I benefited from the extended day where I was able to learn time management and the importance of getting things done early. In addition, through the two summer camps I attended through St. Ignatius, the first being Birch Rock in Waterford, ME and the second being Camp Montserrat in Lake Placid, I was able to gain a different perspective of the natural world away from the city, something that most kids from Hunts Point don't have the opportunity to do.

You may ask, "How can you attribute everything you've earned till this point to St. Ignatius when it was a long time ago?" Although a long time ago, I can say that St. Ignatius is a stepping stone for many of us graduates. Without walking through those doors, I don't know where I would be today. In the year I graduated high school, the graduation rate in Hunts Point was 37% versus the 100% from St. Ignatius through their constant

support in the Graduate Support Program. And without Fordham, I'm not sure Holy Cross would have been something I knew. After St. Ignatius I knew I wanted my education to be based on the values of the school, which is something that I got from Fordham and Holy Cross. Although the leadership positions on campus take up most of my time, statistics like these inspire me to become a man for others and give back to my community on campus which are low income first generation Latino students.

It is very important to give underprivileged students access to these opportunities at a young age so they can tap into their full potential when they are older. I always remember this one quote. "Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school". I may have forgotten the day to day work of middle school, but St. Ignatius has created and fostered a community of intellectually curious individuals who strive for excellence and care for justice in the global world. It was the support I needed in my life to be successful at Fordham which translated to my current success at Holy Cross.

Before I finish, I would like to say a special thank you to four people in the room today. The first one is Tom Troy, who I first met in high school. He was the one who brought me up to Holy Cross for the first time to visit and to interview. He also has helped me now this past year in college to discern exactly what I want to do after graduation in the world of finance. Although he may come off as extremely tough especially during interview prep, he definitely has every student's best interest at heart and will challenge them to succeed.

Secondly, to Mike Herzig, who I first met while I was at St. Ignatius. Every year, Mike faithfully brought me up to a Birch Rock for six summers. Maine was definitely a new world to me where I learned so much and was able to step outside my comfort zone. Mike has also supported me through high school and through the college process whether it was a flight to visit a school or an opportunity to network with people from different institutions. He has definitely become a mentor of mine who I use for advice regarding whatever phase I am going through in life.

The third person is to Mr. Darrell who literally took every teacher role possible when I arrived at St. Ignatius in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Turns out it was his first year as well. During my time there, he was my homeroom, social studies, religion, mock trial and ELA teacher. Even through his transition to principal of the school, he never forgot us and has always supported me, my family, and my class.

Last, but certainly not least, to my mother who is also here today. She has been the backbone in my life and has supported me through every obstacle I have gone through. Like I said earlier, her push for our education is something that has shaped the route my life has taken. She is a loving and caring individual who will go to great lengths to help my brothers and I succeed. I can't wait for the opportunity to pay her back, something I know I cannot do fully.

These four people and many others have had a significant impact on my life, which is something I am forever grateful for. I know with full certainty that St. Ignatius will continue to empower students to set the world on fire. One day I hope to support students who are in the shoes I used to fill. Thank you all for supporting me and the many other students who walk through the doors of St. Ignatius School.