



## Patrick Krieger

As a high school sophomore, Patrick helped launch a non-profit organization called the Young Philanthropist Fund (YPF), a fund that awards grants to inner-city youth organizations that promote civic involvement. Through Students of Stewardship (SOS), a service organization at his high school, Patrick also volunteered with two local Catholic charities: Casa Madre, a house for children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, and The Beatitude House, an organization which helps women and their children break the cycle of poverty by providing housing, education, and family support. At Penn, Patrick served as a CSSP mentor to students at University City High School and volunteered with CityStep, a dance-mentorship program that operates in five West Philadelphia middle schools. He majored in Urban Studies and minored in French. Patrick will join Teach for America in Washington, D.C. after graduation.

## CAPSTONE PROJECT

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# “Black Jesus: An Exploration of Catholic Identity at St. Francis de Sales School”

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Urban Catholic schools in the United States are closing at rapid rates. Due to low enrollment, lack of financial resources, and a dwindling population of clergy to serve as administrators and teachers, urban dioceses have put hundreds of schools on the chopping block over the past decade. The students affected by the closures are usually low-income, minority, non-Catholics. Forced out of Catholic schools that their parents chose for their perceived safety and academic quality, students enrolled elsewhere, most often not in Catholic schools. However, in official Church documents published during and after Vatican II, the Catholic Church has labeled the education of low-income, minority, and non-Catholic youth as its moral imperative. Thus, in allowing for the closure of so many schools, the Church compromises its identity and its values. How, then, do some urban schools survive? This paper serves as an examination of St. Francis de Sales School in West Philadelphia, a school with students demographically similar to those in schools that have closed. It explores how the school maintains its Catholic identity in spite of its majority non-Catholic population and analyzes the school's exceptional model for financial sustainability. This paper posits that St. Francis de Sales School maintains a Catholic identity through its teaching, community, and commitment to Christian service and is critical in helping the Church strengthen the identity of its Catholic school system; without schools that serve low-income, minority, non-Catholics, the Catholic Church would be abandoning one of the core tenets of its philosophy.