

SYI ALUMNA RETURNS FOR MDIV DEGREE

When Cassandra Millis entered Pittsburgh Seminary this fall as a first year M.Div. student, she was already familiar with PTS. A 2006 alumna of the Miller Summer Youth Institute, Cassandra returned last summer as a resident counselor. She explains, “I wanted to be able to facilitate the conversations that had been so formative for me and disciple the young ladies who are at a similarly critical juncture in their lives.”

The Miller Summer Youth Institute engages high school youth to think critically about their faith and to explore calling and vocation during the two-week program. Since SYI began in 1997, more than 300 students have participated.

Reflecting on her own experience with SYI, Cassandra recalls, “On a whim, I applied to the program that radically changed my life.” Prior to attending SYI, Cassandra explains her ecclesiastical experience as “monolithic.” Through the SYI faculty, staff, and fellow scholars, she was exposed to new ideas. “At SYI, my assumptions and preconceptions were challenged for the first time,” she says, “and through that refining process I began to own my faith, to discover truly what and why I believed.”

Working with the 2011 SYI scholars, Cassandra found the program to be every bit as challenging as she remembered. She sought to be a supportive sounding board for the youth as they worked through theological discoveries, and she helped them process how these sometimes alarming realizations can help their love for God grow.

As both an SYI participant and resident counselor, Cassandra learned to value differences in perspective—a skill that will serve her well as she bridges the Word and the world. Her time as a seminarian at PTS has proved to be no different. Both intrigued and unsettled by the diversity of thought among the community, Cassandra values the opportunity to learn from those who disagree with her on theological issues. “I’ve been incredibly impressed by the charity and respect involved in those discussions,” she says.

Written January 2012



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