

# Finding True Beauty

Father Francis helps Marian girls embrace their inner beauty

Commentary by  
Kaitlin **Johnson**

I look at myself in the mirror, paralyzed by fear. Before I can move my eyes to see the damage I have just done, I say a quick prayer. Please be small, please be small, please be small... Just as I suspected, it was huge. Irreparable.

I had just split the seam of my favorite pair of jeans. Had they not been fresh out of the dryer, I would have been able to slip them on, without doing 25 squats to shimmy them up my legs.

Everyone knows the feeling. Whether it is jeans that are too tight, a scar that you can't cover with makeup, or a few stretch marks, these little insecurities are enough to make girls feel terrible about themselves. From pre-adolescence, women are faced with society's pressures of being "beautiful."

On Aug. 26, Father Francis Dominic led Marian's first all school Mass of the year, basing his sermon on the topic of "true beauty."

A typical dictionary definition of beauty is, the quality present in a thing or person that gives intense pleasure or deep satisfaction to the mind. Somehow, women are constantly misconstruing this definition to mean something much more superficial.

More than 11 million surgical and nonsurgical cosmetic procedures were performed in the United States last year.

Kristin Hegge, a nurse at Village Pointe Aesthetic Surgery and Medspa, claims that her clients often have "unrealistic expectations of what can be done by a procedure." She also explains that many people (primarily women) can become obsessed with cosmetic procedures. "We have a 38-year-old who comes in here about every two weeks asking for botox or revisions on her last botox. She has also gotten more than 30 moles removed, and now brings her 11-year-old daughter in to get moles removed as well."

It is not uncommon for girls as young as 11 to come in for treatments. "Something I am beginning to notice is girls about 12 years old coming in for laser hair removal. The reason why I would not suggest this is because these girls have not gone through puberty yet, and the hair will come back most times. It is essentially a waste of money," Hegge said.

Kristen Hammes, a nurse practitioner who works with Hegge, shared stories of

women who go to extremes to have cosmetic procedures done. "There is a 23-year-old woman who comes to us all the way from Miami because she believes she can get the best price here. She is a model and is absolutely beautiful, but there is one wrinkle on her forehead that she believes is holding her back from getting jobs."

These examples illustrate exactly what Father Francis is concerned about. Who are we to let other people tell us who or what is beautiful? The only standards we need to live up to are our own. Beauty is not defined as how we look on the outside. Yet because of the pressures from the media, as well as from family and friends, women constantly feel that they are not good enough.

With this said, what about the gray areas? A 16-year-old had just come in for a consultation early in September. She was seeking a tummy tuck, brachioplasty (reduction of loose skin on the arms), a breast augmentation (breast implants) and a breast lift. My initial thought after hearing about this girl was that she must be crazy. For anyone to request all of these surgeries is insane, especially at such a young age.

However, this young woman was overweight and had recently lost more than 120 pounds. Is it still superficial and ridiculous for her to want these procedures? After losing a lot of weight, it is impossible for someone to get rid of all of the loose skin without surgery. She had put in the effort and lost the weight without surgery, which makes it easy to see where she is coming from, wanting to get rid of the saggy skin she is now left with. The doctors told her that they do not want to perform any surgery on her until she is at least 18 years old. This would allow her to have more time to think about the decision.

Between the interviews and Father Francis' sermon, it is evident that the obsession with body image is a huge problem for women in America. But with the help of people like Father Francis, who aim to see the true beauty in everyone, young women can feel better about themselves. Marian girls empower each other to embrace the true beauty that we all have inside.

Who do you think is truly beautiful at Marian?



Ava Coughlin, senior

"Hannah Goracke is the perfect person to be around. Whether she is having a good or bad day, she always has a smiling face."



Emma Williams, sophomore

"Maggie Witzenberg is the kind of girl who is nice to everyone, and has compassion for others."



Hannah Goracke, junior

"Emma Williams is beautiful because she is very dependable and you can always call her. Her bright personality is always shining!"



Maggie Witzenberg, freshman

"Ms. Piernicky [English teacher] is really caring and she knows how to make learning fun during class. She is a motherly figure to us."

Photos by Kaitlin **Johnson**  
Graphic by Kaitlin **Johnson**

## Q&A with Father Francis

Abbey **Furlow**  
Annie **McClure**



A look inside. Father Francis Dominic presided at Marian's first all school Mass on Aug. 26. He took the time to share some of his life journey with two Network staffers.

Photo by Abbey Furlow

September Network

**Do you think that anything or anyone shaped what you decided to do with your future?**

I think my parents taught me about sacrifice. My dad drove a truck, so he wasn't around a lot. He spent a lot of time away from the family, so that was a sacrifice for him to provide for us. And my mom worked full time and raised five kids by herself. My parents taught me a lot about sacrifice. I wasn't really all big into God up until high school. Then I went on a Steubenville trip when I was in high school. That was just a really cool experience of Jesus and how real He is. After that, there were some key people in Nashville who encouraged me to grow my relationship with God. They didn't think it was weird to love God. So they encouraged me in that. Those types of people were very instrumental.

**What are Intercessors of the Lamb all about?**

Well the Intercessors of the Lamb are a community that is mixed, for lack of a better word. What I mean by mixed is there are priests, there's brothers, there's sisters and laypeople. Families who are part of the community as well. The main focus of the community is to allow Jesus to continue his redemptive mission through our lives. Jesus came to take away sin, so that's the heart of what we're about. To know God's heart and love and surrender our hearts to God so that Jesus can continue to take away sin in the world. We pray a lot and allow Jesus to live through us the best we can in all our weirdness and brokenness.

**What's the hardest part of what you do?**

I would say the hardest part of what I do is basically surrendering to God every day. Every one's life has struggles. Every day the Lord is like, "I love you and I want you to trust me and I want you to surrender to me today." We all like to be in control in some way. So I would say surrendering to God. Some days it's easy, some days it's not. But that's probably the hardest part- just that daily surrender to God's heart. Even though he's way cool and awesome. Humanity is like "Ughh. You want me to do what?"

**Who or what inspires you?**

The 85-year-old guy in the back of the room who is in a wheelchair and he's doing all he can to love on God's heart and be faithful to God. That guy inspires me. The young person who has got all kinds of troubles and struggles at home and they are still willing to be vulnerable with their hearts and take a risk and let people love them. That person inspires me. Someone who is really struggling in their vocation and everything inside them says to quit but they keep going. That person inspires me. My brother who lived one day, he inspires me. All the people in the gospel that Jesus reached out to who felt like they were worthless but Jesus saw their goodness and they took a risk and in doing so encountered Jesus. Those people inspire me.

**What are the best ways that someone can express his or her faith in high school?**

Well, one way would be to be real with prayer life. Be real with what I'm feeling. Take risks

in school and live for God and what you know is right. I don't care what school it is, how Catholic it says it is, there is stuff going on in the school. Just because it's Catholic, that doesn't take away all the junk that can happen. So, encourage each other in school to live for Christ, to live for Jesus, encourage each other in that. And love each other, whether we're weak or we're struggling. Pray with each other. School is a battle zone. That's the bottom line: school is a battle zone. Any school. Love on God's heart, let God love you. Encourage each other to live for Jesus and to not be ashamed of that. My truest friend is the one that points me right to God's heart and that's not always easy in school because sometimes it's easy to say... "U turn."

**Do you have any advice for Marian girls who are trying to figure out what they want to do with their futures?**

Keep allowing God to love you. Give God permission to let His heart desire and dream inside you. Respect yourselves by letting God respect you. Make sure other people respect you, too. It's easy for me to say, well, surrender your life to God, but there are different parts to that. Fall in love with God. There we go, that's probably the heart of it. Just give yourself permission to fall in love with God and allow God to fall in love with you. Everything else will unfold out of that. That's it. Not just, well, the Catechism says this, and this is what I learned in my religion class. Allow myself to fall in love with God and the rest of my life will just...it won't just be me, it will be me and God. There's a big difference.