

**Chris Swartz, a senior at Calvert Hall College High School in Baltimore, Maryland, wrote this college essay after meeting Brother Ghebres.**

**In addition to the essay you have written for the Common Application, please write an essay of about 500 words (no more than 650 words and no less than 250 words). Using one of the themes below as a starting point, write about a person, event, or experience that helped you define one of your values or in some way changed how you approach the world. Please do not repeat, in full or in part, the essay you wrote for the Common Application.**

**1. Tell us about a person who has influenced you in a significant way.**

It was just a usual Wednesday, I expected normal classes and practice after school. A teacher approached me, asking if I could give a visiting Christian Brother from Eritrea, Africa, Brother Ghebreyesus, a tour of our school, showing him how our Lasallian school lives out our Lasallian values. Brother Ghebreyesus' job was to build relationships between his schools in English speaking countries in Africa and the schools of our district who give money each year for these schools. In addition to relationship building, Brother Ghebreyesus told us that his visit to our school was to help him see how he could improve the Lasallian schools back in Africa and get a sense of the American education system.

Brother Ghebreyesus turned out to be a really vibrant, fun guy very interested in the culture of my school. As I took him on the tour of my school, little by little I got to learn more and more about him and where he comes from. As one of fourteen children, Brother Ghebreyesus paid for his education independently, selling small homemade sweets with his sisters for a penny each. He was from a shepherding family, but inspired by the mission of the Christian Brothers, became a Brother himself to carry out the Lasallian mission of service and education for all.

As Brother Ghebreyesus continued to talk about Africa, America, and his process of discernment, I was able to start connecting the dots. Brother Ghebreyesus acknowledged that African schools could not have even close to the type of campus my school has, but it inspired him to dream big for his schools and bring new ideas back to Africa. As he told us more about things, he focused in on the opportunities we had. He

spoke about the wonderful school we had and the opportunities in front of us – to learn and go make a difference with that knowledge we can acquire.

Some of his points started to really hit me hard as I reflected on them. I pictured his struggling African schools, barely able to feed the students and provide them with basic education. Then I looked at myself, dressed in a shirt and tie, with extra food sitting in my backpack, sitting in a building that must have cost millions of dollars, something those African children could only dream of.

Brother Ghebreyesus gave me a wake-up call. It had been weeks, maybe even months, since I had really taken a step back and thought about the life I live and what I have sitting in front of me. I have it so easy, and the opportunities in front of me every day are life-changing. I am starting to gain real perspective from that talk and realize that there are millions of people who do not have anything even close to what I do. It is time to really be thankful for these things and try and give back to those less fortunate than myself.

These thoughts have pushed me to think about ways in which I can pursue my passion for engineering and combine it with serving those in need. I hope that I can use my opportunities to help others instead of just myself. I have no interest in just making money for money's sake. I want a meaning behind the rest of my life, and I feel really motivated to make a difference in others' lives.