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**Cistercian Junior Josh Hays Named 27th Annual Hal Tehan Scholar Award Recipient**  
*Student Athlete and Musician Enjoys Finding Beauty in Life*



**DALLAS** – Cistercian Preparatory School junior Josh Hays has been named the 27<sup>th</sup> annual recipient of The Catholic Foundation’s Hal Tehan Scholar Award.

Each year, all local Catholic high schools may nominate one junior student who exemplifies Catholic values, actively participates in and contributes to the community, and is generally in the top five percent of his or her class.

As the top honoree, Josh will receive a \$10,000 scholarship for his senior year, and each of the other nominees will receive a \$2,500 scholarship.

Hal Tehan was a man fully dedicated to his faith, Catholic education and community. Following his death, The Catholic Foundation Scholar Award was renamed The Hal Tehan Scholar Award in honor of the late Foundation leader, donor and friend.

Josh, the second oldest child of Alicia and Rob Hays of Coppell, will receive the award and share his essay on the importance of receiving a Catholic education during the 41<sup>st</sup> annual Catholic Foundation Award dinner Feb. 10 at the Hilton Anatole. The Hays, while parishioners at St. Ann Catholic Parish in Coppell, regularly attend Mass and other liturgical events at Our Lady of Dallas Cistercian Abbey in Irving.

Josh leads by example at Cistercian, where he has served as a class sacristan and a retreat leader. Additionally, he helped start Project Ezekiel, a youth-led liturgical revival aimed at celebrating the rich musical and spiritual traditions of the Mass, and now organizes their Latin schola.

Academically, Josh has earned straight A's as a high school student and received the Saint Bernard Award, the highest recognition awarded to a student at Cistercian for setting outstanding examples to peers. Recreationally, he plays varsity tennis, gives tennis lessons to youth, plays on the JV soccer team, is a member of the sailing club, and gives piano lessons to children who attend St. Ann Catholic Parish.

"My Catholic education has united me with beauty and bathed me in it by saturating my scholastic experience," says Josh. "But beauty is, as Pope Benedict XVI said, 'an attribute of God himself and his revelation.' I have been taught about beauty, but because of my education, I have also experienced beauty as an attribute of God himself."

Fr. John Bayer, O. Cist., who serves as the form master for the current Cistercian junior class, calls Josh "one of the most disciplined and enthusiastic students in our school."

Fr. Bayer goes on to say that "Josh is so manifestly motivated by his Catholic faith and desire to integrate all things, not just academics, but every asset of his growth as a young man.

"His focus on growth does not lead him to a preoccupation with himself," adds Fr. Bayer. "It somehow always extends also to his community of friends and school as he confidently, but humbly, invites other to join in the fun."

Josh says his parents, along with Fr. Bayer and U.S. and World History teacher Peter Saliga, are his role models. Among the many notable things Josh has drawn from them is the effort to learn the names of students in the classes below his own.

At the busy Hays household, Josh likes being the oldest of five children at home (another baby sister is due in January), since his older brother attends Notre Dame University. He enjoys immensely the time he spends with his family, including playing games and reading around the fireplace, and especially values when he gets to babysit or drive around his younger siblings.

Upon moving to Coppell, he was introduced to the St. Ann High School Ministry program and was blown away to see hundreds of students attending Mass and praying together.

“There is something very special about knowing you are not alone. You look around and see others who are searching not just like you but with you,” says Josh.

The time he gets to interact with students who attend other high schools offers a unique opportunity for Josh to share his Cistercian experience with others.

“I have friends at other schools who can’t believe the things we get to do at school like praying the Liturgy of the Hours, experiencing Eucharistic Adoration, receiving Reconciliation and participating in evening prayers,” he says.

He is proud that some of his friends in the Cistercian senior class are considering seminary after graduation. As such, he has already begun discerning the priesthood, seeing it as a joyful challenge and adventure he may want to embark on, either as a religious or diocesan priest. He is grateful for the example of the Cistercian monks and the diocesan priests with whom he interacts daily.

Josh feels humbled to be the newest Hal Tehan Scholar Award recipient, calling it an honor that reflects his desire to find beauty in life and share it with others to evoke joy in them.

“One way I see joy in life is through music,” says Josh, who has played piano for a decade, along with the trumpet and other instruments. “As Tolkien might say, the language of the angels is music, and I find it so much easier to reverence the liturgy and be more intentional in prayer when music and incense are involved.

“Everything that is incensed is a gift being offered to the Lord, and that includes the people,” he adds. “The people, concretely being offered to the Lord when they are incensed, are tied together with the angelic threads of music in the prayers of the mass, and the Catholic Church truly becomes universal.”

#### **About the Catholic Foundation**

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