November 2012

Dear Connor,

Since you are reading this, it means that you are away at your retreat and this letter is sent to you with great affection. Please think of these letters, and especially mine, as a warm and loving hug to make you smile and to watch over you as you take on your newest and most exciting adventure. Being away from your family and the people that you love can be hard, but it can also be exciting as you discover new experiences and ways to appreciate all of the blessings this life has brought to you. This retreat will give you a chance to mark your spiritual journey as you prepare to take the step from junior high school into the larger and more complicated world that awaits you in high school and beyond. You will see your life from a little bit of a distance, and although you will miss your parents and Eli, Thomas and Marycarolyn, as well as your daily routine, this is a wonderful opportunity for you to clear your thoughts, focus on all of the blessings you have in your life, and really take a look at the world around you and all you have to offer, with new and fresh eyes. This experience will prepare you for the major changes that will come as you enter your high school years, and there will be temptations and commitments that may take you further from your family, your Savior and your church, but please never forget how remarkable you are, how much you are loved, and how much you mean to all of us.

Connor, a lot tends to be expected of a first born, and believe me, you don’t disappoint!! Ever since you came into this world, you’ve been so special to all of us, and I know that some of the greatest joys in our lives have been watching you as you grow and learn and begin to make your precious mark on this world. Most grandparents are proud of their grandchildren, but I think I may just top the list when it comes to a Grandma bursting with pride and love! When Grandpa Rich and I are away from you and your family, we miss you so much, but we also know how wonderful it feels when we are reunited. I cherish the memories we’ve made together. There are so many of them that it’s hard to single out any one or two incidents. It is pure joy when I see your “athletic expertise”… and you know that when I was younger, I was quite an athlete myself, so I can really appreciate your skills!! I love to see how much you love sports, and whether you’re involved in football, basketball, tennis…it doesn’t matter. You bring the same infectious enthusiasm to all that you do. Just ask Grandpa Rich how much he loves to go fishing with you! Attending Grandparent’s Day at your school just makes me even more proud of you. Your teachers rave about how wonderful you are (as if I don’t already know!), your grades are exceptional, and I am inspired by your accomplishments. That you were the only student from your school to be chosen to participate in this retreat is a real acknowledgement of who you are, how compassionate and giving and full of faith you are, how loving, intuitive and caring you are, and your goodness and potential have been rewarded. You are a loving son, a caring and protective older brother, and the best grandson anyone could ever hope for!

Time goes by so quickly and before you know it, you will be going to high school and dealing with so many new situations, new people and new lessons to learn. Grandpa Rich and I are confident that with your intelligence and caring personality, you will go far. Remember that this is the time to build a strong foundation that you will rely on for the rest of your life. I don’t think I have to say this, because you are so bright, but you will see that as you get older, a person’s success is measured by integrity, intelligence, and compassion, and by the number of lives he or she has touched. I know these letters will show you in some way how wonderful you really are. I know you will use these next few days wisely and we cannot wait to hear all about your discoveries and revelations when you get home. Grandpa Rich and I may not be physically close to you all the time, but I know that you know you and your family are always in our hearts and prayers.

Have a wonderful time discovering and acknowledging deeper and deeper levels of faith, love, spirituality and integrity. You are a magnificent young man and we love you very much.

With much love, respect and admiration,

Grandma