

## Mother Knows

By Emily Lorraine Hoenscheid, St. Margaret's Church Plainview

When my forty-three year old mother called me over from the computer last November, she informed me about a meeting at the United Nations called "The Commission on the Status of Women". Women's rights have always been interesting to me. At first, I thought about how intense the commission would be, and didn't want to go. I knew that turning down her offer would make her upset, so I replied, "yeah... sure" and trotted back to Facebook thinking that it would be like everything else my mom says, "Boy, I really need to get those bulbs planted!" (They never got planted) I thought that it would be another good idea but not followed up upon. To my surprise, she did follow up on it. Realizing that this wasn't going to go away, I turned down an offer from my best friends, Carol and Maddy to hang out, and humored my mother up until the second we arrived at Pace University on February 20th. With my heart pounding, I stepped into the Girl's Orientation to see women and girls from around the world; Girl Scouts (called Girl Guides) from New Zealand, women from India, scholars from Africa, the Costa Rican Salvation Army – you name it. Then, Michelle Bachelet, the ex-president of Chile began to speak about women's and girl's issues from around the world. Although it was a lengthy speech, it eased me from feeling like such an outcast in a room full of people (as in men too) who have really lived through women's issues. We were all the same... people. Although some of us have faced more hardships than others, I still had a say in women's rights. I am lucky to live in a country where I don't have to walk 4-6 hours a day to find water, but I can still talk about women's issues in the world.

When we broke out into small groups, I felt another pang of fear, but once our conversation about women in schools started, I became interested in the subject and felt empowered that I had a voice in the conversation. The first day ended on a high note with a speech from Leymah Gbowee, a woman who stopped warfare in Liberia along with hundreds of other women in her town, dressed in white, and protested against their dictator who was giving guns to 7 year old boys. Eventually, they made a warzone – free world for their town and became the subject of a film called, "Pray the Devil Back to Hell". Her speech was powerful and humorous. She is one of the most beautiful, intelligent, loving people I have ever met and is like a role model to me now. I was happy that I came, even though I was still frightened for the next two days to come.

On the last days I traveled into the city, I had to again, decline Carol and Maddy's texts, asking to either hang out or have a sleepover. Carol responded, "not again!" and Maddy said, "ugh! Duuude!" We spent the final two days running back and forth between New York City's Episcopal Church Center and the United Nations Chapel that celebrated all religions. The religious services were musical and touching with the Bishop Roskam, (who is a woman) surprising me with the fact that the Holy Spirit is, in fact, a woman and should be referred to as "She." (I'm not making this up, she said it says so in the Bible!)

Then, heavier issues showed their ugly head in the group discussion and I have never felt so spoiled in my life. When it wasn't a girl being sold into prostitution, it was genital mutilation, or warzones in Liberia. I stood, engaged, with an open mouth of shock, realizing how little I knew about the world outside of Northport, where I live. These were extremely interesting and intriguing topics and I took notes throughout the sessions. My final group talked about women are portrayed in the media. In my school, I take a fashion marketing elective, and we have talked about this subject multiple times. It was my favorite session in my experience at the UNCSW. We talked about shows like Jersey Shore, Teen Mom, and Toddlers in Tiaras, about idiot girls who spend their lives either in pageants, fist pumping, or getting pregnant at sixteen. Don't get me wrong, I like the shows too, but

when we watch them, we might not realize how sexualized they are. Now when I watch those shows, I can see how badly they are making women and girls look... and we're paying them to do it by watching them!

Overall, it was a wonderful experience with my mom and it actually drew us closer. Next year, I am definitely doing this again and I think that more people should too! Girls, don't be scared to step up like I was. If you've got something to contribute to your world, speak up! It has been a great experience! Remember girls, your mom knows best. The whole experience was just like writing this article, I sooo didn't want to do it, especially on a Friday night when I could be hanging out with my friends, but now, as I am writing the final sentence, I realize it was a good thing to do... and this time, I'm not just humoring my mom!

Emily is a lifetime member of St. Margaret's, where she serves as an acolyte and is the official parish Easter Bunny!