Justice in Jesuit Higher Education

FEATURES

2 Higher Education, Justice, and the Church, Margaret Farley
6 The Issue of Same-sex Marriage, Ennio Mastroianni
8 Heterosexism: An Ethical Challenge, Patrick Hornbeck
10 Accompaniment, Service, and Advocacy, David Hollenbach, S.J.

FOLLOW THE MONEY

13 Just Employment and Investment Policies, Josh Daly
14 Financial Aid: Need Based or Merit Based? Jeff von Arx, S.J.

ART AND JUSTICE EDUCATION

16 Justice by Design, Mary Beth Akre
17 Speaking of Justice, Greg Grobis
18 Amplifying the Diminished Voice, Dan Pitera
19 Community through Art and Design, Janden Richards and Wanda Sullivan

22 Undocumented Students, Rick Ryscavage, S.J.

26 Faith in the Future, Jason Welle, S.J., in cooperation with The Jesuit Post


COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

30 New Perspectives; New Questions, Nancy Pineda-Madrid
32 Ending Absolute Poverty, Stephen Rowntree, S.J.

34 Stories We Tell, Karsonya Wise Whitehead and Jason Taylor
35 A Neighborhood Partnership, Kent Koth

TALKING BACK

37 Graduate School and Jesuit Identity, Chris Staysniak
39 Eloquencia Perfecta in the Digital Age, Patrick L. Gilger, S.J.

PHOTO COLLAGES

25 Seattle University • 36 Canisius College

Front cover painting, oil on canvas, by Spring Hill College student Ariana Assif, for the Homeless Portrait Project.
Back on Campus

In the heat of summer, university campus life is slow, moving along in low gear. In St. Louis, the days are just too hot for a fast pace. The walkways, the buildings, the lawns with their sculptures are recouping, saving strength, building reserves.

I moved into this last summer, when I left New York and came to St. Louis to work at the Institute of Jesuit Sources, whose offices are in Jesuit Hall at the edge of the St. Louis University campus. From my seventh-floor office I looked down on university buildings and athletic fields, east towards downtown St. Louis and its iconic arch, with the hills of Illinois beyond. This was a far different vista from my quarters in New York, where the horizons were brick walls, the furthest maybe thirty feet away.

July passes and early August, and the campus begins to change. Students start to show up, part of some activities groups. A few more follow, and the pace picks up. Suddenly one weekend the cars arrive with license plates from neighboring states, families excited and nervous, parents holding on just a little longer, daughters and sons impatient for them to leave and just a little scared when they hug and say goodbye. Returning students show up a few days later, and the campus is in full swing. This is college life.

The ritual of the new academic year awakened memories of a decade earlier, when I worked at Company, a national Jesuit magazine. Our offices were on the campus of Loyola Chicago, and there too without being a part of the academic rhythms we felt their life energies. Earlier I spent eight years at Xavier in Cincinnati, mostly as director of campus ministry; there I was part of the rhythm of the year and knew the relief of summer slowdown.

Last fall I was invited to become the editor of Conversations. I was flattered, but I had a lot of questions. Can I add this to my main job? Can I shift focus? I am not an academic, but can I work with them? But I thought of those students, the focus of so much Jesuit ministry. I thought of their families and the trust and the expectation and the hope they carry with them as they drop off their eighteen-year-olds and entrust them to our care. I really felt honored to contribute to this ministry through Conversations, putting to work in another way the background I had been developing since grade school in writing and editing.

Editing Conversations involves different expectations from the usual editor’s job. Soliciting contributions is the work of the members of the seminar, who meet three times a year to discuss topics, look for writers, and decide on content for the journal. Fr. Pat Howell, the chair of the seminar, does a lot of the work of gathering submissions and distributing them to participants. For this issue, I came late into the process, after the material had been gathered.

Still, by now I have met with the seminar twice and have come to appreciate the members’ interests and talents. And I am happy that this issue takes up aspects of social justice, which has grown to great importance in the Jesuit world in general and in Jesuit education in particular. Social justice was not absent from my education at St. Ignatius High School in Chicago in the late 1950s, though the term was usually “Catholic action.” I trudged off on Saturday mornings for projects with the Catholic Interracial Council. Groups of us sometimes worked with the Little Sisters of the Poor after school. A colleague and I once interviewed the legendary activist Ed Marciniak for our school paper; he was most gracious with these enthusiastic teenagers.

Now, though, social justice has taken on a central importance. Justice issues abound in curricula. Service learning has a large footprint in student options. And simple service projects are an everyday part of many students’ campus life.

In late May, students piled back into family cars heading home for the summer. They said goodbye to roommates and friends and promised to keep in touch. Families were back together, survivors of separation and new experiences. Seniors lingered until they donned their caps and gowns in the rituals of deeper separation, of moving ahead, of embracing what lies beyond. They cheered, they cried, they hugged, and they left. The faculty relaxed. Administration felt satisfaction. The university had once more fulfilled its mission for a term. And the campus rested for a while.

I am not completely sure how it came to be that Conversations asked me to take on the editor’s role, but I am sure that Fr. Ray Schroth, S.J., had a hand in it. I met Ray in the 1960s at Georgetown. I was a young scholastic in summer school there; Ray was a new priest beginning doctoral work. I have known him through the years. And we worked together for the year and a half I was at America magazine. Conversations owes a lot to Ray for his ten years as editor. I am grateful for what he did and for whatever part he had in getting me involved. It is great to be back on a vibrant campus with a view of distant horizons. And I look forward a couple of weeks to when all those great students return and the campus comes fully alive once more.
Persons from every area of Jesuit higher education gather this month for an annual conference on commitment to justice. We are challenged by the title of this year’s conference: “On Fire at the Frontiers.” We focus on social justice from the vantage point of encounters with others, “contact points,” insofar as the many dimensions of our work bring us to “engage with someone, something, or someplace else.” Social justice, after all, refers to justice in relation to others—whether as individuals or as groups, families, nations, churches, or institutions of higher learning. It encompasses systems, strategies, interpersonal and social goals and norms, struggles for mutual acceptance, hope for a common good, and clear-sighted development of criteria for what counts as justice in blending our lives together in the real world. In this conference about frontiers, concepts of social justice must attend to and in some way cross over borders of culture,
age, gender, geography, religious beliefs, and social and economic exigencies. Such encounters require openness to what is new. This is why higher education is a way to social justice, and social justice is essential within the fabric of the task of higher education.

We might first consider the ways in which social justice “begins at home”—that is, in the institutions of higher education themselves. The “other” is always before us. A just community of learning, for example, is one in which students can trust the competence, care, and justice of their teachers, and teachers can trust the genuine desires for union through knowledge and love with what can be learned about the vast reaches of the universe and the microscopic dimensions of the tiniest of creatures. Such a community, at its best, can create an ethos which kindles curiosity, energizes its participants beyond what is taken for granted, advances interdisciplinary and cross-cultural, inter-religious explorations that open new horizons for growth in understanding and even wisdom. Real learning—through whatever processes or with whatever resources—yields insights about the interrelationships of all beings and the dignity in the heart of every person.

I cannot, in this short essay, detail further what is realistically as well as “devoutly” to be wished regarding social justice within our particular institutions of higher learning. I turn, rather, to consider a more general, overarching, way of thinking about human interrelatedness and social justice. More than thirty years ago, Michael Buckley, S.J., pointed out that most higher education (including Catholic higher education) had for centuries been focused on studying human achievements—in science, the arts, politics, architecture, the winning of wars and conquering of territories—without paying attention in any major way to vast experiences of human suffering. Learning of human successes without learning of human pain; or learning of conquerors without examining the devastation and exploitation of the conquered; learning about the ideas of thinkers and leaders in dominant classes without a concern for the societally marginalized and the poor led and may still lead to the estrangement of an educated elite from the lives of the desperate and from world-wide phenomena of human misery.

This has changed, of course, with movements in Catholic (and other) colleges and universities to require student community service and to provide opportunities for urban immersion as well as global travel seminars for local students aimed at experiences around the world. These movements have made it possible for ordinary students to relativize their perspectives on learning and on the peoples and nations they study. Out of such a new and renewed context for higher education have emerged radically expanded insights about humanity and the world which it shapes and by which it is shaped.

Two theological concepts are consonant with a concern for human suffering, and also help to broaden, sustain, and anchor this concern within Christian and Catholic higher education. They are “world church” and its correlative, Jesus’s query to his disciples, “Can you drink the cup that I will drink?” They echo, I believe, profoundly humanistic concepts of responsibilities of humans for all humanity, and even a kind of natural sisterhood and brotherhood among us all. But they focus a particularly Christian imagination as well as universal Christian imperatives to care for one another and for all neighbors near and far. I came to understand the power of these concepts and their potential for holding together human interrelatedness and social justice while partnering with Catholic African women in responding to the HIV and AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa. Since then, these two concepts have seemed to me particularly apt for interpreting our interrelatedness with one another, with the whole Body of Christ, and with all creation.

**World Church and Its Meanings**

Many Christians think that Christianity as “world church” means that the Christian gospel has been taken to the far corners of the world. But ours is a time when the concept of “world church” can be given a radically new content. Articulated by theologians like Karl Rahner in the wake of Vatican II, understanding “world church” requires a recognition that the Christian gospel was never meant to be only or even primarily a Western European or North American gospel exported like the rest of Western culture to other parts of the world. We
now realize that this gospel (or God's self-revelation in this way) cannot only be received in every language and culture, but it can be given, spoken out of, every language and culture. It belongs to every culture and generation; it is significantly shaped by the cultural diversity of those who are open to it and believe it. As Rahner insisted, we stifle its possibilities when any one culture claims nearly total control over its forms. Here, then, is an overarching task and possibility: to come to know and understand how a universal church is alive in particular times and places, and how we must learn to relate with co-believers everywhere.

At least two consequences follow from such a concept of world church. The first follows from the fact that the church has not always thought about itself in this way. In the past, for example, Western Christianity exported teachings regarding the status of women and about sexuality that have become part of the problem with HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. Imposition of attitudes and practices shaped by Western culture destabilized traditional African cultures. To understand the breadth of this problem, and its nature in terms of justice and injustice, critique or affirmation, requires understanding cultural traditions and the people who stand in them.

The second consequence of a new concept of world church is the realization that we are all—whether in Australia or Africa or China—all equal sharers in the one life of the church, partakers in the one life of the Spirit of God. We are all therefore called to bear the burdens of one another when the church in one part of the world is in special need. If HIV/AIDS or poverty or oppressions of any kind are problems for the churches of Africa (or India or the U.S.), they are problems for us all. No one in the “world church” can look upon such situations as simply “their” problem, or conversely only “our” problem. The gospel that comes to all of us calls us not only to assist one another but to stand in solidarity with all, especially those who suffer the most.

If religious traditions have anything at all to say to situations like a pandemic, they must speak of God and of human responsibilities to one another in relation to God. Words of hope and possibility, and deeds of love, will be true insofar as they are shaped by accurate understandings of situations and plausible identification of claims of justice. Great human goals of mutual respect, solidarity, fairness, and compassion come slowly. Yet we must labor together—to overcome our ignorances, temper our biases, and stretch our hearts and actions so that the challenge, “See how they love one another,” becomes more and more possible. Only thus will we not only resist injustices, but we will learn how to accept others and how with God to mend the world. Catholic and Jesuit forms of higher education are not removed from these imperatives.

Can You Drink the Cup?

Every major religious tradition has had something to say in response to the large questions of people’s lives—questions about God, about human destiny, about the heights and depths of creation, and about how to make sense of human suffering. Insofar as we stand in the tradition of Jesus Christ or other world religions (or perhaps any other world religious tradition), we must remember the meaning of what has been revealed to us and experienced by us. Not every aspect of higher education is theological in substance, but it can be open to the transcendent. It can be part of the great search for new discoveries, further understandings of earth and its inhabitants and the stars beyond. Higher education is a place where we “study” these questions and ponder glimpses of their answers.

Suffering, both human and nonhuman, is perhaps the deepest mystery of all for us. If we wonder what God is doing in both the creation of joy and the allowance of pain and if we wonder what God asks of us in the face of so great a challenge as an AIDS pandemic, there may be clues in a story told in the gospel of Mark (as well as Matthew). We know the story: James and John come forward out of the group of disciples to press Jesus to do for them whatever they ask. Jesus responds, “What is it you want me to do for you?” They say they want to sit at his right and left hands when he comes into glory. Jesus gives them another question: “Can you drink the cup that I will drink?” They answer, “We can.” Of course they did not “get the point” of Jesus’ question to them; nor would they even begin to understand it until the final terrible day of Jesus’ life.

In retrospect, we recognize the mistake James and John made, yet we may have difficulties ourselves in understanding what Jesus meant. We know the “cup” to
be a symbol of the cross, which in turn symbolizes for us the suffering that Jesus was to undergo. But what does it mean for any of us to drink this cup, or to be called to this cross? I hazard the following interpretation: When we encounter suffering that is like the pain and fear of death at the heart of the AIDS pandemic, we know that its meaning cannot be simply a kind of test, or a deserved punishment, or something that is intrinsically good for us. What AIDS (or homelessness, oppression, rejection) brings to us is so profound a suffering that it would be blasphemy to say that God allows it for any of these reasons—reasons disproportionate to the suffering itself. Rather, what Jesus tried to reveal to his disciples, and to us, was not only that they must be willing to endure a suffering that might be like his own, but that they must “drink the cup that I must drink.” The cup to be shared was and is the cup of Jesus Christ. But what do we know now about this cup? We know that it is the cup of the suffering of all persons. If we are to drink this cup, we are to partake in the sufferings of everyone else. It must therefore signify suffering in forms of sickness and tragic accident, human limitation, natural disasters—catastrophes great and small. Yet something in particular characterizes some of the sufferings signified. Given the context and nature of the final sufferings of Jesus, we cannot fail to see that his suffering is the consequence of injustice that is somehow central to the cup. This is suffering that does not have to be, suffering that results from destitution, abuse, violence, and cruel abandonment. Here is the suffering that cries out for an end not in death but in change.

Human relatedness and social justice: We need practical ways to understand these, to hold them together, to drink of the cup that is also a cup of love, a cup of covenant, a cup of transformation. The way we both encounter and think about such matters may both motivate and strengthen our pursuits of open paths in higher education that are paths to justice.
I have been experiencing pressure to form a judgment about the issue of same-sex marriage. Residing in Maryland and working in the District of Columbia where same-sex marriage is legal, I find myself in a conflicted situation. Many of my neighbors, colleagues, and students are supportive of marriage between only a man and a woman while many others are supportive of same-sex marriage. Listening to people who are dear to me makes it hard to form a solid position on an issue. Many of my loved ones and respected colleagues can be heard to say: “Let the gays and lesbians marry. This issue is important to them and does it really make a difference if we pass laws to recognize their unions as marriage?” Here is a brief account about how I have come to decide about the issue of same-sex marriage.

I base my conviction that marriage is a lifelong partnership between only a man and a woman on two key sources, revelation and natural law. Both sources uphold that real marriage requires three essential dimensions: sexual difference, love, and fruitfulness (openness to procreation). Without all three dimensions, there is no real marriage. It is the dimension of sexual difference, found in revelation and natural law, which emerged as the critical criterion in my decision-making.

While reading Pope Benedict XVI on the topic of finding an adequate biblical method for encountering Scripture as a living word to guide our living, I experienced insight about revelation. Because the historical critical method leaves the biblical word in the past, Benedict claims that it is in and of itself an inadequate tool for believers. To overcome this weakness, Benedict demonstrates how to complement the historical-critical method by reading individual biblical texts as a member of the Christian Community. Believers are to approach texts in the context of the unity of the bible and tradition with Jesus Christ serving as the interpretive key for unfolding the meaning of the text for our living.

Benedict’s own words are helpful to
Older texts are reappropriated, reinterpreted, and read with new eyes in new contexts. They become scripture by being read anew; evolving in continuity with their original sense, tacitly corrected and given added depth and breadth of meaning. This is a process in which the word gradually unfolds its inner potentialities, already somehow present like seeds, but needing the challenge of new situations, new experiences, and new sufferings, in order to open up. (Jesus of Nazareth, Book One, Forward)

Benedict’s inspiration has roots in the Second Vatican Council. Citing the Constitution on Divine Revelation (DV 12), Benedict writes that the reader’s aim is to interpret “individual texts within the totality of the one Scripture, which then sheds new light on all the individual texts.” He continues that within the unity of Old and New Testaments, it is the person of Jesus Christ that facilitates an encounter of the text as a living word. That is, presupposing an act of faith and the use of historical reason, the Christian “sees Jesus Christ as the key to the whole and learns from him how to understand the Bible as a unity.” In short, Benedict echoes the Council by describing the connection between Scripture and Tradition: “For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end.” (DV 9)

The Bible contains many examples of interpreting the Bible as Benedict proposes. One example is in Mt 19 when the Pharisees test Jesus on the topic of divorce. After the Pharisees ask: Is divorce lawful? Jesus responds: “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female…the two shall become one flesh?” Following Benedict, I examined together the two Genesis stories of the origin of persons and Jesus’s pronouncement on marriage. Meditating on Jesus’ words, I experienced an inner turning of my mind toward the living Word of God, the confluence of scripture and tradition. In short, I affirmed for myself Jesus’ insight about marriage as a male-female union.

Why is the method that Benedict proposes important? Without it, I fear, Christians diminish their ability to discern how the Holy Spirit reveals to them the meaning of biblical texts as light for Christian living. Without the Holy Spirit’s guidance through Scripture, we Christians may chase undiscerningly every spirit of the age that pulls at our heart strings. Given the perennial unjust treatment of gay men and lesbians, is the implication that the larger community is obligated to identify the life-long partnerships of same-sex couples as marriage?

The magisterium’s unequivocal response is “no,” especially in light of the revealed truth in the Creation Stories of Genesis. The magisterium consistently teaches that this scriptural revelation cannot be read anew to allow for same-sex marriage. Although it is true that the understandings of marriage in Catholic tradition have evolved, they have consistently evolved as a male-female union that is open to procreation.

Natural law too makes evident the kind of union that is founded on male-female difference. Namely, human beings are irreducibly male or female, a biological fact necessary for reproduction. Father Earl Muller, S.J., advances this observation by the use of the Aristotelian category of first substances: “In concrete experiencing, bodiliness and sexuality are inseparable; they can be distinguished only by abstraction….There is no humanness apart from sexuality whereas there is humanness apart from any given color, ethnicity, age, social condition, and so forth. Destroying all Chinese or all the elderly does not destroy the human race. Destroying all males or all females very quickly does entail that destruction.”

Effectively combining the insights from revelation and natural law, John Paul II affirms that male-female distinctiveness is an indispensable fact of reality upon which human beings are sacramental of the image of God and upon which marriage is built as a male-female communion of persons. Pope John Paul II writes: “Man, whom God created male and female, bears the divine image imprinted on his body ‘from the beginning’. Man and woman constitute two different ways of the human ‘being a body’ in the unity of that image.” In summary, “Man exists always and only as a masculine or feminine being. There is not a single man (or woman) who can by himself alone be the whole of man” (Angelo Scola).

In brief, the Creator purposely creates human beings as male persons and female persons. Revelation and natural law establish that male-female unions are ontologically different than same-sex unions, a necessary fact for the perpetuation of the human race. Naming same-sex unions as marriage eclipses real marriage as a male-female union, and consequently, veils revelation and possibly diminishes the heart’s attentiveness to the voice of the Triune God mediated through scripture and tradition. The conviction that marriage is between only a man and a woman evolved from the correlation of the insights from Genesis with the natural law insights of the reality of human beings as male persons and female persons.
In recent decades, secular and religious advocates for social justice have examined the dynamics of systemic oppression. Rather than describing racism and sexism in terms of individual acts of bigotry, intolerance, and violence, scholars have studied more deeply how society and its institutions privilege, often latently, some persons, identities, and ways of living over others. This mode of analysis, known in theological circles as “structural sin” or “social sin,” has evoked compelling new insights about race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality.

Patricia Beattie Jung and Ralph F. Smith’s book *Heterosexism: An Ethical Challenge* (1993) marked an important moment in Christian theological engagement with the sexual other, that is, with the persons, identities, and practices often designated LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer). Jung and Smith argued that interwoven beliefs in society and in religious institutions perpetuate the view that “heterosexuality is the normative form of human sexuality,” and they demonstrated that these networks confer a range of benefits on heterosexuals and heterosexual couples at the expense of non-heterosexuals. Heterosexism stretches far beyond the views that any individual might possess, and thus to dismantle heterosexism requires deep, often painful changes in social structures as well as individual attitudes. Indeed, the summons to overcome heterosexism is applicable to a wide range of American institutions: federal, state, and local governments; hospitals, schools, universities, and churches.

For those who work in Jesuit colleges and universities, issues concerning sexual diversity are now more salient than ever. Six of the 28 U.S. Jesuit institutions of higher education now host centers that take diversity in gender and sexuality as a primary concern. At least 21 sponsor student, staff, or faculty organizations for LGBTQ persons and their allies; 15 organize events to mark Coming Out Day, the Day of Silence in remembrance of the victims of homophobic bullying, or the graduation of LGBTQ students. Simultaneously, however, these initiatives have often been critiqued from outside as signs that our institutions has lost their way with regard to their Catholic identity. And the U.S. Catholic bishops have opposed civil marriage for same-sex couples as a key plank in their religious, social, and political agenda.

Official Catholic teaching on homosexuality (formal church documents speak of “homosexual persons” and “homosexuality” rather than gays and lesbians, and there are few, if any, such documents, that discuss bisexual or transgendered persons) is complex and contested. It affirms that homosexual persons “must be accepted with
respect, compassion, and sensitivity.” Violence “in speech or in action” against such persons “is deplorable,” and “[e]very sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.” Yet at the same time, the church describes as disordered not only same-sex sexual activity but also “the particular inclination of the homosexual person,” what we might call sexual orientation. Because of this condition of “objective disorder,” “[s]uch persons...find themselves in a situation that gravely hinders them from relating correctly to men and women.” For this reason, in 2005 a Vatican congregation prohibited the admission of openly gay men to the priesthood and to religious orders, although some studies have estimated the percentage of gay men in the Catholic priesthood at 30 percent or higher. The church’s official position, then, is not so much a matter of “love the sinner, hate the sin” as it is that gay men and lesbians, by virtue of their sexual orientation, undergo “a trial” and can be incapable of fully human affectivity.

The Catholic theologian Gerard Jacobitz has pointed out that this position stands in tension with the church’s teachings on “the intrinsic and unconditional dignity of the person, and...the essential reliability of human reason informed by practical experience.” Other scholars in a variety of Christian denominations have produced historically sensitive readings of the biblical texts once thought to condemn same-sex partnerships and sexual activity. They have sought to understand the ethics of human sexuality by tending to questions of justice between persons rather than by applying an exclusively act-based morality, and they have sought the counsel of scientific studies on human sexuality. On the whole, Catholics are more accepting of homosexuality than are the members of every other Christian denomination in the U.S., and clear majorities of U.S. Catholics favor civil marriage for same-sex couples, employment protections for LGBTQ persons, and the adoption of children by gays and lesbians.

Where does the interplay of all these conflicting forces leave Jesuit colleges and universities? It seems that Jesuit institutions could be called heterosexist by Jung and Smith’s definition. For instance, housing policies presume that students are heterosexual and cisgendered (i.e., their gender identity matches up with their assigned biological sex) and, thus, should be roomed with members of the same rather than the opposite gender. Instructors unconsciously cause LGBTQ students to feel excluded when the terms and examples they use in class assume the heterosexuality of all their students. Where institutions grant benefits to the same-sex partners of employees, they often do so under euphemisms like “legally domiciled adults.” Some institutions do not grant such benefits at all. Institutional leaders may not consider the implicit and explicit ways that policies, statements, and campus traditions can relegate LGBTQ individuals to second-class status.

However, Jesuit institutions of higher education are by no means uniquely heterosexist. Many other religiously affiliated colleges and universities—not to mention a great many public institutions—observe all the policies described above. Although the religious identity of Jesuit colleges and universities may contribute to heterosexism, it would be unfair, not to mention counter-productive, to scapegoat an institution’s Catholicism for all its shortcomings in this regard.

Instead, a characteristically Jesuit way of proceeding may enable us to overcome heterosexism in our institutions. Ignatius of Loyola, in writing the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and in dealing with the diverse group that he and the other early Jesuits gathered together, urged that those in authority come to know deeply the strengths, weaknesses, aspirations, doubts, and dispositions of their colleagues, in order that they might be able to tailor their decisions to what would be best for each individual and for God’s greater glory. Rather than prescribing a uniform set of solutions to the problem of heterosexism, we might examine which elements of living and learning on each of our particular campuses promote and which elements hinder the full human flourishing of LGBTQ persons. In addition, we can ask: In what ways can fundamental Catholic and Ignatian commitments to the dignity of the human person, to the primacy of conscience, to the search for God in all facets of creation, and to the promotion of social and ecclesial justice inform our response?

These questions are not easily answered, nor are their answers easily put into practice. For the short term, Jesuit institutions must continue to inhabit the tensions between official church teachings, the conscientious statements and actions of their ecclesial defenders, the equally conscientious work of theologians who have reached different conclusions, and the rapidly shifting attitudes of Americans in general and college students in particular. All agree that what’s unacceptable is the persistence of episodes of homophobic bullying, violence, and suicide. As more of our institutions courageously face up to how they have participated in the systematic privileging of heterosexuality, space will open up to engage in deeper reflection on what it means to be human, what it means to love with one’s whole person, and what it means to witness to the all-encompassing love that Christians call God.
My reflections on the commitment to justice in Jesuit higher education will draw on my experience of teaching a number of times at Hekima College, a Jesuit institution of higher learning in Nairobi, Kenya, and on my work in collaboration with the Jesuit Refugee Service at the Boston College Center for Human Rights and International Justice. I focus primarily on two groups of people who carry particularly heavy burdens: the millions of Africans who have been driven from their homes as displaced persons and the many millions more who live in extreme poverty in the continent.

The Challenges of Refugees and Poverty

Refugees are persons who have fallen through the cracks of the international political system, cracks very often created by war. The loss of human life is war’s greatest cost, but the displacement of people from their homes receives insufficient attention. The division of the world by the borders of over 190 countries is a crucial determinant of their plight. Refugees are legally defined as people who have fled across an international border because of “well-founded fear of being persecuted.” Forced migrants also include people displaced inside their own countries (IDPs) by war, human rights violations, and natural or human-made disasters. There are well over 60 million persons in our world who have been forced from their homes by such causes. This involuntary movement of people threatens their most basic human rights such as having a home, sustaining their family, moving freely, having some say in the political life that shapes their fate, and even surviving.

Poverty raises equally daunting challenges. There has been some progress on the elimination of poverty in the developing world in recent years, for which we should be grateful. Nevertheless, nearly 50% of Africans continue to live in extreme poverty. This raises the challenge of how our ethical responsibilities reach across frontiers.

Normative Considerations

Catholic thought possesses important resources that can help meet these challenges. There are important biblical bases for our response. The historical memory of Jews and Christians recalls that when the people of Israel were poor and displaced in Egypt, God liberated them and gave them a new home flowing with milk and honey. The people of Israel are called by God to befriend the orphan, the widow, and the alien, for when they were poor, oppressed aliens in Egypt God came to their aid (Deut. 10:17-19). Matthew’s gospel tells us that right after the birth of Jesus, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt…Herod is going to search for the child.

David Hollenbach, S.J., holds the University Chair in Human Rights and International Justice at Boston College.
to destroy him.” So Jesus, Mary, and Joseph became refugees (Matt. 2:13-14). In his parable of the final judgment, Jesus taught that those who enter the kingdom of God are those who cared for the poor and welcomed the stranger (Matt. 25:35). The poor and the refugees should, therefore, be of special concern to Christians.

These biblical perspectives overlap with principles that can be affirmed also on secular grounds. The dignity of the person is the basis of human rights, including the rights of refugees and the poor. Our dignity as persons be attained only in community. No person is an island. People driven from their homes as exiles are harmed by that very fact. The same is true of those who are excluded from the growing benefits of our increasingly integrated global economy.

The situation of the displaced and poor people of Africa is a serious injustice. In their pastoral letter Economic Justice for All (1986), the U.S. Catholic Bishops stated that “Basic justice demands the establishment of minimum levels of participation in the life of the human community for all persons.” Put negatively, “The ultimate injustice is for a person or group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were non-members of the human race.” Displaced people suffer this fate. Precisely because they have no community to call home, they lack the support needed to attain minimal human dignity. In effect, they are being told that they simply do not count as human beings.

Poverty also wounds both the dignity of poor persons and the well-being of the communities in which they live. When 50% of Africans today are living on less than $1.25 per day, politics easily falls into violent conflict, as it has in eastern Congo and Sudan. Such conflicts in turn create large numbers of displaced persons and thus exacerbate the conditions that cause poverty. Conflict, displacement, and poverty reinforce each other in a vicious circle.

**Structural Challenges**

These injustices imply that there is something seriously wrong with a system of global politics that fails to protect so many millions of people. In his 1965 letter “Peace on Earth,” Pope John XXIII argued that realities such as the acute suffering both of the poor and of refugees imply that “the shape and structure of political life in the modern world...are unequal to the task of promoting the common good of all peoples.” We need to reexamine the presuppositions of our global system. John XXIII and Benedict XVI both called for a “public authority, having worldwide power” capable of advancing the worldwide common good, including the good of refugees and the poor. At the same time they also insisted that this global authority should be governed by the principle of subsidiarity—it should not seek to replace nation states or distinctive cultural communities but should aid them in their service of our common humanity.

This fits well with some of the trends in current international relations theory, which note that not just states but also a complex network of other institutions increasingly shape the globe. The world is neither divided into self-contained nation states nor is it a single global community of all human beings in undifferentiated unity. The global order that is actually emerging can be called a networked world. Multiple linkages across borders give each community the capacity to act in an increasingly interconnected world. Sovereignty should be seen as “a place at the table,” interacting with other states, with intergovernmental bodies on both regional and global levels, and with a host of nongovernmental agencies, including religious communities such as the Church and its many subcommunities.

**New Possibilities in a Networked World**

Let me offer several suggestions for how we might work more effectively to protect the dignity of the poor and displaced of our networked world.

First, we need sustained efforts to build peace where conflict has killed many people, forced even more from their homes, and kept whole countries in extreme poverty. This requires regional action by states neighboring those experiencing conflict as well as support from more powerful countries of the developed world. It also calls for serious engagement by religious communities and nongovernmental agencies. The commitments of Catholic Relief Services to peace building and of the Jesuit Refugee Service to working for reconciliation are important components of this process.

Second, such efforts should be preventative and not wait until grave violations have begun. Nor should they end when peace agreements have been signed. For example, the needs of the many returning to their homes after war will be addressed only by efforts to heal the wounds of people divided during conflict.

Third, countries of the developed world have a responsibility to share the burdens of aiding the displaced and to contribute to efforts essential to alleviating poverty and conflict. One’s responsibility to help people in serious need is proportional to one’s capability to help. In Africa, many countries receiving large numbers of refugees are so poor they simply cannot assist them. Countries with greater capacity to help have a greater responsibility to do so.
Perhaps the biggest challenge is that a call to be “realistic” could cause us to give up before we even start. Regarding African poverty, for example, the effectiveness of aid has been challenged by some analysts who argue that it creates dependency and encourages corruption and thus should be replaced by market-based initiatives. While such critiques contain elements of truth, they overlook the failure of the market-oriented structural adjustment programs of the 1980s and early 1990s in Africa. The present global financial crisis often makes poor countries unattractive sites for investment and less able to enter into global trade markets. And some aid programs have been notably successful, such as those targeted on alleviating HIV-AIDS, on other health needs, and on educational programs essential to longer-term development and thus to peace. Pope Benedict recognized this when he addressed the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in 2010, stating that “the worldwide financial breakdown has...shown the error of the assumption that the market is capable of regulating itself, apart from public intervention and the support of internalized moral standards.”

Sign of Hope: the Work of Jesuit Refugee Service

Let me conclude by suggesting that we in Jesuit higher education can learn something important about these issues from the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). The JRS was founded just over 25 years ago, and in this short time refugee and migration issues have moved from a marginal concern to one of the top five priorities of the Jesuit order. How did this happen?

JRS has three dimensions to its ministry: accompaniment, service, and advocacy, which are equally relevant to efforts to address poverty and development issues. Accompaniment means being with the refugees and the poor on the ground, listening to their stories, showing them in action that they are not forgotten. Many refugees say this is the most important help they receive from JRS. It also has a deep impact on those who are listening, stimulating commitment to take action. The analogy in the university is volunteer programs that enable participants to accompany those in need. Such accompaniment leads to service. In the JRS it has led to education programs for refugee children who live in very poor urban areas and to the establishment of safe havens for refugee women threatened with sexual violence. Such service, in turn, leads to seeing the need for advocacy to change the policies that cause displacement, conflict, and poverty. Accompaniment, service, and advocacy thus support each other and, in turn, have an impact on public opinion that can have real influence.

From accompanying and serving refugees, JRS workers learned for example that many had been wounded by land mines. This led to JRS participation in the global campaign to abolish land mines. This advocacy was shaped by intellectually careful analysis and by dialogue between practitioners and analysts. It helped generate a campaign that eventually succeeded in having most of the countries of the world—sadly, not the U.S.—ratify the global treaty abolishing land mines. This campaign received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977.

This has important implications for the development of Jesuit higher education today. Advocacy should begin with the careful attention to the experience of the displaced and the poor that arises from accompaniment. At the same time, successful advocacy requires serious intellectual analysis. I hope these reflections will help us see that justice calls Jesuit colleges and universities to become more active and effective in their interconnected efforts at accompaniment, service, and advocacy on behalf of the poor.
Have our Jesuit campuses fully lived out their ideals when it comes to the rights of campus workers and the investment of university endowments?

A three-year campaign for a living wage for contract workers at Georgetown peaked in 2005, when students went on a nine-day hunger strike. At Loyola New Orleans, a campaign by students and dining services workers crescendoed after a well-loved employee was fired for her union-organizing activity.

For administrators, responding to situations like these has been fraught with challenges around neutrality in labor disputes and financial constraints. Given this, it would be easy to dismiss protesting students as radical or naïve. But then, too, we would have to dismiss the challenging call of the late Jesuit superior general Fr. Pedro Arrupe to practice the works of justice:

• First, a basic attitude of respect for all people that forbids us ever to use them as instruments for our own profit.
• Second, a firm resolve never to profit from or allow ourselves to be suborned by positions of power deriving from privilege, for to do so even passively is equivalent to active oppression. To be drugged by the comforts of privilege is to contribute to injustice as silent beneficiaries of its fruits.
• Third, an attitude not simply of refusal but of counterattack against injustice; a decision to work with others toward the dismantling of unjust social structures so that the weak, the oppressed, the marginalized of this world may be set free.

Jesuit values and business operations need not be at odds. What makes the above cases remarkable is the response of the respective administrations. At Georgetown, the administration worked quickly with various stakeholders to develop and implement a just employment policy, which sets guidelines on issues like wages, benefits, and organizing rights for contract employers. At Loyola, a task force created by the president spent a year to research and create a similar policy. Both schools have advisory committees that now ensure that the policies are followed.

Similar issues exist around our endowments. Currently, students at hundreds of colleges and universities—several of our Jesuit schools among them—are calling for divestment of endowments from fossil fuels. Others, following the Move Our Money campaign, are calling on our schools to invest in their local communities.

Again, several of our schools have developed constructive ways forward. Loyola Chicago has an active shareholder advocacy committee, which engages the companies LUC is invested in on human rights and environmental issues. And Fordham recently made a

**Just Employment and Investment Policies**

**An Idea Whose Time Has Come**

By Josh Daly

Josh Daly serves as the interim director of the Center for Community Engagement at Loyola University in New Orleans.
We are all aware that St. Ignatius wished Jesuits not to charge for their ministries, including the ministry of education, so that students would be admitted to our colleges regardless of their ability to pay. He expected us to beg for the support of our works! This proved to be impractical in the long run, but the contributed services of Jesuits, who constituted the majority of faculty in our schools for most of Jesuit history, meant that fees were low, even when they were charged. Here in the United States, our colleges were founded in the interest of a mostly urban, immigrant population who could not afford the fees that most private institutions charged, and even these modest fees were often waived for students who could not pay them in an informal economy of financial aid administered by the Jesuits.

As our institutions changed, and especially as we hired more lay faculty and staff who had to be paid a living wage, tuitions rose and formalized. Today, a few of our institutions are in the fortunate position to honor a commitment not only to need-blind admission but also to meeting fully the demonstrated financial need of all the students they admit. They do this typically with the help of large endowments. But I do not mean to minimize the struggle it is even for these institutions to meet this commitment, especially in the current economic climate.

For the rest of us, who cannot meet full financial need, we have traditionally tried to make as much need-based financial aid available as we could. There have been some exceptions to this practice, most notably athletic grants-in-aid, which are awarded irrespective of need (although, of course, many athletes have need), and merit scholarship programs to attract the very best students (presidential scholars, etc.). But a commitment to awarding most financial aid on the basis of need has

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been characteristic of our Jesuit institutions as a fundamental matter of social justice and the first and most obvious thing that a Jesuit educational institution can do to meet our obligation, repeated in one general congregation after another, to be in solidarity with the poor.

A commitment to need-based financial aid has contributed as well to maintaining and expanding diversity on our campuses. This is most obvious in the case of socio-economic diversity. Kids from working class backgrounds cannot attend our (mostly) expensive schools without substantial aid, but there is also a correlation between that availability of need-based financial aid and racial and ethnic diversity.

In the last several years, I believe there has been a trend in some of our institutions toward awarding more financial aid not on the basis of need but on the basis of merit. Typically, institutions do not release information on the distribution of merit- versus need-based financial aid, but I think all of us know, if only anecdotally, that it is true that some of our institutions are awarding more merit-based financial aid. It is increasingly the case that when letters of admission and financial aid awards are sent out, admissions offices and sometimes presidents are confronted by cross-admitted students—and more frequently by the parents of these students—with letters from institutions, including other Jesuit institutions, offering these students substantial merit-based financial aid, and we are challenged to match those offers. Or, when we lose cross-admitted students and ask them why, we often find that it was because of a merit scholarship they had been offered at the school they chose.

The result has been that even schools that are trying to hold the line on need-based financial aid are finding themselves in an arms race with their competitors in which they must offer merit scholarships in order to compete. The consequence of this is clear: the neediest students are getting less financial aid, and merit scholarships are going to students who either do not demonstrate need, or to supplement the financial aid packages of low-need applicants.

No one school can resist or reverse this trend toward an increase in merit-based financial aid. If we care about this issue, and I believe we should as a matter of social justice and solidarity with the poor, it has to be addressed at the systemic level. The network of Jesuit colleges and universities might be one place to start.
It takes only one step to start on the path to justice. In the Images to Social Justice project, students in design classes are asked to create a visual image that reflects an issue of social justice. It engages students in both a reflective and an active way. “What is justice?” and “What matters to you?” become questions of discernment. Research and development of a visual idea challenge students who may never have been involved with service. They also help students understand the world beyond their immediate community. This study will show how a single visual arts project can inspire students to understand and advocate for justice in the world.

The project is called “Images of Social Justice.” The media are collage from magazines, printed images from the internet, ink, markers, paint, glue. For the content students in two dimensional design class are given this project midway through a semester. At Loyola Maryland, 2D is a fine arts core offering with a wide range of classes and majors. Some students have never participated in service; others are vibrant members of the Center for Community Service and Justice. The technique of collage unites all differences in abilities and experience.

The Images of Social Justice project begins with the design concept of unity. To a designer, unity means arranging all of the elements into a harmonious whole. The design has to look like all the parts belong together. To achieve unity, designers use the gestalt grouping principles of visual organization: proximity, similarity, closure, and line of direction. Students must meet the formal parameters of the project: use one or more grouping principles to create a unified and balanced collage that centers on an idea of social justice. Interestingly, the gestalt theory of visual organization says that humans perceive the whole before they see parts, an idea that reinforces itself in the content of the project. We are all humans first, and we see differences only after understanding our similarities. By learning, reflecting, and finally advocating about an issue in social justice, students see their connections to others in the world.

The more difficult part of the project is content. Coming up with the idea that they want to consider very difficult. I ask my students, “What matters to you?” To help them further with discernment, I ask them to define justice. I assure them that I will support their idea, no matter what it is. They have absolute freedom in terms of content, which is absolutely essential to the project. I feel that many of them do not even know what matters to them yet or do not understand things outside their immediate world at Loyola or at their homes. Being attentive to issues in their local, national, or world community is a major step in the path to advocacy. Students can choose to see issues in social justice that they have not noticed before. For students to take the step towards justice, they have to trust that their ideas will matter and that what they want to express is important.

Students collect images first and then begin to edit and arrange them. As they work, I continue to challenge them to speak clearly and with passions. I ask them to define what advocate means and to imagine how they might be able to advocate with their artwork. Students take breaks to walk around the room and look at what others are doing; this leads to discussion and a sense of collaboration. I encourage students to support each other’s work; this creates more trust and enables them to speak freely. Once the collages are finished, I ask the students to write up a reflection on their social justice issue. We post all of the work on the wall and discuss each piece in terms of technical issues of design and in terms of content. Each student has a chance to describe one’s thought process and one’s work.

Finally, I show their work in public. The collages appear in display cases outside the art gallery or on the walls of campus ministry, the academic advising office, or any other venue that engages viewers in visual dialog. Being attentive, being reflective, and engaging in a dialog with viewers create a beginning for students to follow in service and to be men and women for and with others. It is a simple but crucial step that creates a sense of ease with advocacy and with serving others.

Mary Beth Akre is an associate professor in the department of fine arts at Loyola University Maryland.
"Understanding your world and the impact it has on you and the impact you have on it" is what Yolanda Fleischer believes is central to the concept of social justice. The quest for this understanding guided the creation of *Unheard Voices: Homeless Monologues*, a 2010 original production developed and directed by Fleischer, retired professor of theater at the University of Detroit Mercy.

In 2008, homelessness was nothing new in Metro Detroit, but with the economic downturn of the time, more people found themselves in need and in search of help wherever it might be available, from public agencies to nonprofit shelters and food pantries to sidewalks and traffic lights at busy intersections.

Increasing opportunities to witness the suffering of the homeless raised common questions for Fleischer and her colleagues: Who is responsible for this problem and who is responsible for solving it? Am I responsible?

*Unheard Voices: Homeless Monologues* developed out of conversations around these questions.

Over the course of 40 seasons, the Theatre Company, now a part of the performing arts department at UDM, had developed a preference for topics of justice and social change.

Fleischer and her colleagues took inspiration from the work of such socially-missioned artists as Eve Ensler (whose *Vagina Monologues* the Theatre Company has co-produced several times) and Anna Deavere Smith, who has asked: “What is the gap between understanding and action? And what does it take to bridge the gap?”

Under Professor Fleischer’s direction, the Theatre Company sent trained volunteers to 30 homeless shelters throughout Southeast Michigan with the goal of making connections and finding personal stories that could illustrate the roots of homelessness.

Fleischer says, “They were not just getting the words of a homeless person but they were talking to the person and getting the answers. They were also taking notes about how they ‘read’ that person, what they felt about them and what that person’s soul was. This is important: [the performers] were not going to imitate the person but they should channel them, recreating them and giving them a voice.” Stories of those experiencing homelessness emerged and, with permission, the Theatre Company composed original monologues to bring their stories to light.

Through empathetic portrayal of people living on society’s fringes, the goal of *Unheard Voices* was to present the lives, hopes, pains, and spirit of the homeless community, to inspire justice, and to help dissolve negative prejudices surrounding the homeless.

Historically, the theater has existed not only for entertainment and performance but also as an essential cultural vehicle for social communication and reflection: a place where we can come together to examine life, ponder our place in history, and begin to define our individual and collective identity. Theater can awaken our awareness, promote social change, and foster a fuller and more human conversation among all people.

How do we bridge the gap between understanding and action?

Providing art that inspires awareness and conversation is a good start.

Greg Grobis is assistant professor in the performing arts department and director of marketing and management for that department at the University of Detroit Mercy.
When we at the Detroit Collaborative Design Center view the ecology of the design profession, we see three glaring inconsistencies. First, too many architects are working for the few people at the top of the economic pyramid and only a few are working for the many people at the bottom. Second, the student of architecture and the recent graduates have a diminishing number of opportunities to gain experience in quality professional offices. Finally, too few firms working in the city of Detroit are thinking critically about the opportunities in the city and celebrating the citizens of the city. The structure and mission of the Detroit Collaborative Design Center (DCDC) at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture are designed to address these three inconsistencies. To do this, the DCDC has modeled itself after a teaching hospital—a place for learning by doing, exclusively for nonprofit organizations. Students work alongside professionals, similar to how students work alongside doctors in a teaching hospital.

I would like to focus on the first of the three inconsistencies in these brief thoughts. Many underlying and subtle discussions are embedded in the lines that follow. They are presented to provoke thought and conversation.

We do not believe that architects are intentionally or maliciously working for the few and not the many; but we do think that in general, practice has strayed afar from its professional roots. They do not have the money to pay for our services. If we include more people in the process, it will weaken the final product. There are so many other more important things they need before good design. Such thinking restricts us to a certain way of working because it limits us to a certain way of seeing. The Detroit Collaborative Design Center attempts to alter this way of seeing and working.

A client who directs a free clinic for drug abuse counseling recently made the point that design is an issue of social justice. (For reference, the DCDC defines social justice as the distribution of both advantages and disadvantages across the full cross section of society.) Let’s think about a walk down Adams Street from Union Station in Chicago. We cut through Federal Plaza in front of the Post Office at the corner of Adams and Dearborn. Pausing in this space, we see many people moving in many directions on foot, bike, skateboard, wheelchair, and shopping cart. People are standing and talking as others pass by them with just inches to spare. The ground of the plaza accepts all who enter. There are no steps, no fences, and no bollards. Further down the road, we see another public space that has a barrier along the sidewalk. Where the barrier stops, steps lead down to the usable space. The plaza is primarily empty. It is a visual urban ornament. It looks like public space, but it does not act like public space. It does not accept the public.

One might say that building codes provide ramps and other amenities to help give access to more people. This is true. But they are only technical improvements. Visual clues can be designed to make people feel unwelcome even if the appropriate code elements are in place. Let’s also be honest here. The people that these places are trying to keep out are those who push shopping carts. There are no code provisions for shopping carts used in this manner. This is an issue of social justice. True public space is to be enjoyed by the public at large—that includes people who use skateboards and push shopping carts.

The conditions in these examples could occur anywhere—from neighborhoods, to buildings, to landscapes. A place may appear to be open to the public, but subtle design cues can keep people out. The question then becomes: Who is left out of the decision making process? Where is their voice in this process?

The DCDC works to answer these questions. In a socially engaged practice, it is common to hear someone say that they are giving this person or this marginalized group a voice. At the DCDC, we submit that everyone has a voice. It is our society’s power structure and cultural heritage that allow some voices to speak louder than others. The DCDC attempts to establish processes to amplify the diminished voice. With respect to the built environment, the DCDC works to bring this diminished voice into an equitable dialogue with previously more dominant voices. The DCDC engages the people who are often marginalized or underrepresented and bridges the gaps between people rather than further separating them. By amplifying diminished voices, other voices are not excluded; they are simply not the only ones heard. We work hard to widen the process to include all people, all programs and all places.

To view our projects, please visit our website at www.dcdc-udm.org.
Spring Hill College’s Department of Fine and Performing Arts engages art and design students in experiential learning classes and projects with community partners. These classes enrich students’ academic achievement and personal growth, and they build relationships in the community. We call this “Community through Art and Design.”

In 2009 the Alabama Governor’s Office contacted the art department and asked if students could provide artwork for a publication on homelessness in Alabama. The first of three Portrait Projects began with the Homeless Project. Students in drawing, painting, and printmaking were required to spend time at a multi-service facility for the homeless population in Mobile. Their final assignment was to do a formal portrait of one or more of the clients they met. Besides learning formal technical skills, the students began to see homeless people not as faceless statistics but as people with individual stories.

The next school year, we did the Portrait Project at the Boys and Girls Club. Students spent time with a child throughout the semester and then did their portrait for the final. They gave the portraits to the kids. Poor, minority kids are eager to feel special, and they were absolutely thrilled with their portraits. The portraits themselves were outstanding. The students poured their hearts into the portraits, because they cared about these kids, they were invested.

For the past two years, advanced painting students have painted murals in schools; hence the Mural Project was born. Last year they painted at Little Tree pre-school for autistic and non-autistic children, and this year they did a mural in the library at Palmer Pillans Middle School. They have developed a reputation for their work.

Graphic design students work with several organizations whose primary purpose is the common good. Developing promotional materials for these organizations helps heighten students’ sense of civic responsibility.

Students are exposed to a broad range of cultural experiences, some of which are outside their comfort zone. The projects build empathy, helping students to identify others’ needs. They are challenged beyond theoretical understanding of design principles and technical skills learned in regular classroom assignments. Exposing our design students to a broader range of cultural experiences helps them question not only how a design looks but also what it communicates, what it means.

Evaluation of the work includes written and oral reflection as a way to enhance learning.

One student, Tyler Hartlage, had this to say as he presented his brochure to our community partner: “St. Mary’s Home offers hope to abused children through love, trust and acceptance. My concept for the brochure reflects St. Mary’s mission, it is straightforward and positive but difficult to carry out.”

Another reflection by student Rachael Cochran shows the impact of the program: “Every week I looked forward to Friday afternoon when I would go spend a few hours with a woman who became a part of my family at Little Sisters of the Poor. Her name was Gerdiest. Gerdiest and I became fast friends and some afternoons it was next to impossible to pry me off of her floral couch. She always had some fantastic story to tell me.

“She became such a big part of my family that when I started seriously dating my now boyfriend she made me bring him to meet her just to make sure he passed all of her tests. He did, and every week after she asked me when I was going to bring him back. Volunteering at Little Sisters of the Poor gave me such an incredible opportunity to meet someone who opened up my eyes to so many wonderful things.”

Artists and designers need curiosity and an awareness of disciplines beyond art and design to succeed in their professions. In “Community Through Art and Design,” students have opportunities to research social and environmental issues, interact with our partner organizations, and make presentations of their work.

Janden Richards is an associate professor of graphic design, and Wanda Sullivan is an associate professor of art; both are at Spring Hill College, Alabama.
There are tens of thousands of vacant houses in Detroit. If they are not renovated, most will be demolished. There appears to be no middle ground. Any left standing in limbo will slowly deteriorate, blighting the physical and psychological landscape. PlayHouse provides an alternative, a long-term strategy between full renovation and demolition. The project removed the two-story sidewall of an abandoned house to make the interior visible to the side yard, a half block of vacant and abandoned properties. Three adjacent properties will be designed as exterior seating facing the house, making it a two-story stage. A new exterior “skin” of rotating and sliding panels will open to reveal all or only a portion of the stage. These panels will use original material from the removed sidewall. Fabricated by community residents, artists, and young people, PlayHouse will be an artistic and cultural centerpiece in an area of Detroit that has been listed as one of the three poorest zip codes by the U.S. Census Bureau.

PlayHouse was born of a series of temporary installations titled FireBreak, a unique example of community organizing through architecture and design. The Design Center, alongside community artists and residents, has transformed the blight of the abandoned burned house into a public asset. FireBreak believes that everyone can shape one’s world. It has fostered a series of artistic and architectural installations. With local resources, it has already completed twelve houses.

The Alley Project Gallery has three focal points: (1) a garage adapted as a studio, classroom, and gallery for youth; (2) two adjacent vacant lots that provide an art park for neighbors and artists; (3) a walking gallery along an alley, where garages become the canvases for high-quality murals with signage to explain the pieces. This place for viewing art is thus an interactive space where community members create, show, and engage street art legally and safely, which supports learning and builds community.
After the nineteenth-century Italian Jesuit Luigi Taparelli, the intellectual mentor of Pope Leo XIII, coined the term social justice, it found its way into the vocabulary of the followers of British philosopher David Hume and eventually into the vocabulary of the wider secular world. Taparelli saw social justice as a virtue exercised on behalf of the common good. The common good was the creation of social conditions where everyone in a particular society can reach their full potential as human beings. He assumed that the virtue of social justice could be prudentially applied to an ever-changing variety of social problems.

Within the Catholic community, until recently the problems associated with migration were not entirely accepted as social justice issues. The Church's caring for immigrants was considered a work of charity, not of justice. Immigrant and refugee services such as the central work of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) were not focused on changing socio-economic and political structures. JRS was not normally invited to Jesuit conferences on social justice. Thankfully this attitude has been changing. Pope Benedict's emphasis on love as at the heart of the social mission of the Church and stating that social justice requires charity persuaded many Catholics to take a fresher look at the problems of human mobility.

Beginning in the early 1990s it became clear that millions of people were entering the United States without the government's authorization or entering legally but then overstaying their temporary visas. Most of these newcomers were young people who were having children. These children thus came of high school age in the first decades of the twenty-first century. The 1982 Supreme Court decision in the Plyler v. Doe case guaranteed undocumented children free public education through grade 12 under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The court was silent, however, about the children's access to higher education. Federal law does not prohibit public colleges and universities from accepting undocumented students. States may admit or bar undocumented students as a matter of law or state policy. Private colleges and universities such as the Jesuit schools are free to set their own policies, but they are prohibited from

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using any federal money to benefit undocumented students. It is estimated that 65,000 undocumented young people graduate from high school every year in the United States. Perhaps only 7,000 go on to higher education.

In 2010, the Ford Foundation funded Fairfield University in Connecticut as well as partner schools Santa Clara University in California and Loyola University Chicago to conduct a two-year study of the situation of undocumented students at the 28 Jesuit institutions of higher education in the United States. Both legal and social science research teams were created at the three schools. Each school in turn picked another Jesuit school in its geographic region to work with. The six institutions represented the mix of Jesuit higher education in the U.S.: urban, suburban, large, small, mostly commuter, mostly residential.

The study employed a mixed method research model that included long, in-depth, structured interviews with key staff and students at selected Jesuit schools as well as local high schools and community organizations. Additionally 110 admissions, financial aid, student services staff from all 28 Jesuit schools responded to an on-line survey that included both fixed choice and open-ended questions. Researchers paid great attention to confidentiality, and the research was cleared by the internal research review board at each of the lead institutions.

The study takes an extensive look at the situation of undocumented students today. What challenges do they face? Why are so few undocumented students attending schools of higher education? What are the institutional practices and attitudes toward the undocumented? How do federal and state laws affect their college experiences? How can we as a morally committed system of education join together to support the human dignity of undocumented students who find themselves adrift in a society that is often hostile to their future because of the choices of their parents?

**Some Findings**

Among the 28 Jesuit colleges and universities there is no consistent policy regarding undocumented students. Instead there is a wide array of informal ad hoc procedures involving a small number of staff at each place. This fragile system cannot address all the challenges that these students face, so the students have a lingering perception that they are not fully supported by their schools.

- There is much confusion and a lack of information among the faculty and administration about the undocumented.
- All the undocumented students interviewed found the admissions process difficult. They relied on an informal network of community advocates, parish priests, peers, high school advisors, and individual teachers and on their own hard work to find their way to the Jesuit universities.
- Underlying the admissions process for undocumented students is their constant fear of detection by the government, especially if they put members of their families at risk for deportation. In June 2012 the Department of Homeland Security issued a new regulation called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). It defers deportation for two years and enables the student to obtain work authorization, a social security number, and, depending on state requirements, a driver’s license. This is a welcome relief for the students, but it is temporary. Nor does it include undocumented members of their families, and the students are still barred from federal financial aid and loans.
- The biggest barrier to higher education for these students is financial. Coming mostly from poor families, they have to rely on private scholarship money. Even with a full scholarship, some of them still struggle with paying for books, transportation, and food.
- The students also experience culture shock at some schools. As first generation college students from poor families, they have difficulty navigating a university education and adjusting to life among so many affluent fellow students.
- One of the greatest life challenges undocumented students face is their post-graduation employment. Even if they have a passion for and real talent for a career in teaching, public service, law, medicine, nursing, or engineering, they realize these careers are closed to them because they all require a certification process that involves disclosing their illegal status. Career guidance offices often are not equipped to help these students make important choices about majors and graduate programs.

**Recommendations**

In terms of social justice, perhaps the most important relief these students could get is a comprehensive immigration reform law that grants them a fast path to citizenship. These are young people raised in America. They bear no moral or legal responsibility for their situation.
They should be allowed for the sake of the common good to reach their full potential and make a strong contribution to American life.

The majority of Jesuit presidents have already signed an Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities document supporting a path to citizenship. They also issued a statement in February in Washington, D.C., pledging, in the spirit of the Jesuit principle of “cura personalis” (care for whole person), to create a welcoming and supportive environment for these special students at their colleges and universities.

Giving the students access to citizenship will not solve all their problems. Unless something is done to legalize undocumented members of their families, they will continue to live in fear of a family member being taken away from their home.

They will still face all the challenges on campus that most first generation students have to deal with, especially the need for financial aid. The study identifies best institutional practices, including special support systems, campus information sessions, and staff training.

**The Moral Framework**

The Ford Foundation asked that the Jesuit research be given an explicit moral framework capable of influencing other private institutions of higher education. The Catholic Church has a uniquely well-developed and sophisticated approach to social, economic, and political questions. Since Jesuit values and pedagogy are rooted in this Catholic intellectual tradition, it was natural to frame the research on undocumented students in light of Catholic moral teaching. The premises and principles of Catholic social teaching can be understood and appropriated by non-Catholics.

Six principles were chosen as the most appropriate moral guides to dealing with the issue of undocumented students:

**The Common Good:** the importance of creating the social conditions where all individuals in the society can flourish to their full human potential.

**Human Dignity:** Basic human rights are bestowed by God, not by the state; and these rights are not restricted to citizens of the state.

**Family Unity:** Keeping families together is an essential characteristic of a good society. Immigration policies should never separate families through detention and deportation of students, mothers, fathers, uncles, and aunts who have been living peacefully in the United States and who have not committed a crime beyond living in the country without authorization.

**Solidarity:** Solidarity is the social principle that reflects the interdependence and interconnectedness of all human beings. We are all part of God’s family. Solidarity with one another is also primarily a moral virtue directly connected to the practice of social justice. Solidarity promotes union of people in a way that enhances the quality of public debate.

**Subsidiarity:** This famous Catholic principle, originally developed by Luigi Taparelli, has been called the most important principle of social philosophy, because it protects people and groups from legal and social abuse by higher authorities. The principle implies that the federal government should allow lower levels of government and even non-governmental groups the opportunity to shape laws and enforcement principles that reflect the special conditions and problems at the local and regional level. Some states have stronger border enforcement needs; some cities have become “sanctuary cities,” issuing identification cards to undocumented immigrants. Unless there is a clear violation of human rights, this flexibility should never be taken away by federal authorities.

**Charity:** As Pope Benedict said, charity is at the heart of the Church’s social teaching. Doing justice is a primary way of expressing charity, but charity transcends justice. Without charity, mercy, and forgiveness, a just society will become a cold inhuman society. Undocumented students should be treated justly but also treated with love and compassion.

Applying these great principles to the concrete arena of policy and law is not easy. Catholics of good will can and do differ on the best way to achieve the common good. Care for the poor and marginalized is an immutable demand of Christian life. But how to care for these students is a matter of making informed prudential decisions. It means choosing from among many limited and imperfect options.

**Immigrants as Our Past and Future**

The majority of Jesuit schools in this country were established to serve poor immigrants, and they were tremendously successful. With the huge influx of young newcomers today, these schools have an opportunity to recapture a mission rooted in the past but capable of energizing the entire future of Jesuit education in the United States.
Formation for justice has been a part of Jesuit education from its beginning. As Ronald Modras writes in Ignatian Humanism: “The early Jesuits were not bent on fomenting social revolution, but they were conscious of being reformers. They saw education as a means of producing good leaders and citizens for society and good priests for the church.” In late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Jesuit colleges in the United States adapted the Ratio Studiorum, while staying true to its formative principles, to keep pace with changing realities in American higher education, replacing the standard seven-year European model with differentiated high school and university four-year curriculums, allowing students to explore broader subjects through elective courses.

By the time Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, former superior general, addressed Jesuit educators at Santa Clara University in October 2000, Jesuit education had undergone another shift. A well-rounded classroom education was no longer seen as adequate in a rapidly changing world; contact and practical experience were now considered vital to holistic education. Inspired the Second Vatican Council’s call to engage the world, Jesuit universities found both inspiration and consolation in Fr. Kolvenbach’s words: “When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change.”

So with service and justice well ingrained in the Ignatian pedagogy and in Jesuit universities today, what might the future of social justice look like? Perhaps the answer can be found in the address given by the current superior general, Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, in Mexico City in 2010. He likewise comments in that address that Jesuit universities have recognized the need to move beyond an intellectual education and provide opportunities for direct contact. However, Fr. Nicolás also reminded representatives of Jesuit universities then that a Jesuit university is not merely an intellectual institution, requiring “learning and intelligence, imagination and ingenuity, solid studies and rigorous analysis,” but that it is also a “ministry or apostolate: in the service of the faith, of the Church, of the human family and the created world that God wants to draw more and more into the realm of his Kingdom of life and love.” Fr. Nicolás reminds us of the 32nd General Congregation of the Jesuits, which states: “The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement.”

While it is true that many universities include faith in the articulation of their missions, in phrases such as “Faith that does Justice,” it is also true that for many of our students, the social justice mission is disconnected from its foundation in Catholic principles. I would suggest that a reinvigoration of the service of faith, that is, the ministry aspect of the mission of Jesuit universities, is the next stage in the development of the proyecto social (as noted by Fr. Nicolás in Mexico City) for our universities.

Renewal of the Catholic faith identity of our Jesuit universities cannot be expressed merely in terms of numbers of Catholic students nor by stately chapels on our campuses. It also cannot be limited to the scholarship and instruction of Catholic theology, although that

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is certainly essential, especially as Catholic theologians engage in dialogue and investigation across disciplines. Furthermore, most of our schools reflect more and more the religious diversity of the United States and the global community, and we are rightly sensitive that the service of faith not be reduced to proselytization. So in what ways might we renew Catholic faith identity in our universities in a diverse environment?

To answer that, I suggest the example of another Jesuit who has risen to prominence recently: Pope Francis. In particular, three moments in his first two weeks as Bishop of Rome present a model for our universities to engage the ministry of faith in the promotion of justice.

- In his mass at a juvenile detention facility on Holy Thursday, Pope Francis demonstrated these two principles in action by washing the feet of prisoners, both men and women, including Muslim youth.
- At an audience with journalists he said: “Since many of you are not members of the Catholic Church, and others are not believers, I cordially give this blessing silently, to each of you, respecting the conscience of each, but in the knowledge that each of you is a child of God. May God bless you!”
- In his audience with ecumenical and interfaith leaders, he spoke of “promoting friendship and respect between men and women of different religious traditions...There is much that we can do to benefit the poor, the needy and those who suffer, and to favor justice, promote reconciliation and build peace.” Furthermore, the different faith traditions can work together “to counter the dominance of a one-dimensional vision of the human person, a vision which reduces human beings to what they produce and to what they consume: this is one of the most insidious temptations of our time.” He went on to identify non-believers who, while searching for truth, goodness, and beauty, are partners in the cause of human dignity, peace, and the care of creation.

In these instances, Pope Francis articulates a model for bringing together the faith and justice aspects of the Jesuit mission. It respects the individual conscience of believers without obscuring or compromising Catholic faith and identity, and it engages people of all faiths and backgrounds in a dialogue not only about justice but also about a multidimensional vision of humanity. And it offers the service of faith in the promotion of justice to all members of society, regardless of background or religious identity. Without faith, Pope Francis explained in his first homily, the Church and by extension her institutions, including our Jesuit universities, are nothing more than “charitable NGOs.” We are set apart by the magis, the search for more: more meaning and more truth and more beauty in humanity and humanity’s works, including those of justice and mercy.

In the last 100 years, Jesuit universities have demonstrated a characteristic adaptability to suit the mission to the particular situation, all the while staying true to the founding identity of Jesuit colleges and universities in forming ethical leaders for a complex world, both through rigorous academics and opportunities for service. In the next 100 years, our universities have another opportunity to demonstrate that same adaptability by enacting a renewal of “the service faith, of which justice is an absolute requirement,” in a pluralistic culture. Fr. Nicolás, in his Mexico City address, noted that “this commitment to a dialogue between faith and culture...has always been a distinguishing mark of Jesuit learned ministry.” In doing so, he recalls Pope Benedict’s words to the Jesuits that our mission is to serve “those places where ‘faith and human knowledge, faith and modern science, faith and the fight for justice’ meet.” Therein lies the future of social justice in Jesuit higher education.
Let’s imagine that we wanted to establish a basic course that would pool the wisdom of faculty and alumni on what the graduate of a Jesuit college or university should know about the Society’s commitment to social justice. I asked a cross section of teachers to share their judgments on what is both a best and a basic book that their students should read for this course. Here is what they said. Ray Schroth, S.J.

**Americans Are Hard to Love**

Back in the 1950s I switched majors from accounting to history in senior year, when I took a great books seminar and read Alexis DeTocqueville’s *Democracy in America*. After that I decided I would go to graduate school because DeTocqueville confirmed my experience that Americans are really interesting. He taught me that democracy is not just about politics but about everything in American life. As promise and very uneven practice, democracy is at the heart of those dreams we call American. Why read it in Jesuit schools? Because democracy, in DeTocqueville’s time and in ours, is about how faith with its option for the poor might somehow work out or even bring about “liberty and justice for all.” Christian faith is about love of God and neighbor, and American studies, beginning with *Democracy in America*, open our minds and imaginations to our neighbors. Americans are hard to love sometimes, but without them the Kingdom of God, the beloved community, will have a very hard time coming.

David O’Brien is emeritus professor of history at the College of the Holy Cross.

**Tell No Lies**

If there is but one reason for daring to ask a student to read Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, it is so that student might encounter the challenging yet luminous words of the Elder Zossima in Book Two’s “A Lady of Little Faith.” Who among us has not fantasized about heroically saving the world while neglecting to attend to the unglamorous daily works of active love? What if Zossima’s command, “above all avoid lies, all lies, especially the lie to yourself,” became a daily discipline? For me the building blocks of social justice are found in this hopeful yet all-too-human book: tell the truth, love all whom you encounter, and be merciful and forgiving.

Anna J. Brown is chair of the political science department and director of the social justice program at Saint Peter’s University.

**A Harsh Reality**

What is each individual person able to do and be? Martha C. Nussbaum’s *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* places this question in dialogue with the prevailing theories of social justice and argues that when these theories reference indicators like an increase in GDP as evidence of “progress” this means very little to the billions of women, men, and children worldwide who daily go without the basic necessities and freedoms that so many others take for granted. The capabilities approach to international development provides not only an eye-opener to the harsh reality of global poverty and exploitation but also serves as a call to action to any reader interested in creating a more just society.

Tom Regan, S.J., is professor of philosophy at Loyola University Chicago.

**Our Broken World**

When our students assume their place in the world of work, we hope they understand they are doing something more than just earning a paycheck. Blessed John Paul II’s *Laborem Exercens* is a powerful reflection on the meaning and dignity of work. According to the encyclical, all work should help “to realize [our] humanity.” Through our work, we also participate in God’s mending of our broken
world. Many workers today regularly encounter exploitation. *Laborem Exercens* gives them hope by insisting that all workers have the rights to unionize and to a just wage, affordable healthcare, and other benefits necessary to “ensure the life and health of workers and their families.” This great encyclical helped inspire Solidarity in Poland and evinces that the Church stands in solidarity with workers everywhere.

*Gerald Beyer teaches theology at Saint Joseph’s University.*

**Prophet and Pastor**

Reinhold Niebuhr’s *Moral Man and Immoral Society* is eighty years old, published in 1932 when Niebuhr had moved to New York to join the faculty of Union Theological Seminary. It expresses how our group and national interests shape our application of moral and religious ideals to contemporary society. Niebuhr combines the moral demands of the prophet and pastor, the sarcastic perceptions of the social analyst, and the confessions of the sinner (especially when discussing American racism and imperialism). His comments manifest the ruthlessness of his honesty and the intensity of his passion for justice. He does not give us a nice orderly map of what justice requires. Rather, he gives us a compass that swings around as we do but which ends up pointing true north. His love of irony corrects the rationalistic confidence of Catholic ethics; his honesty in the face of history corrects the delusions of American exceptionalism and self-regard.

*John Langan, S.J., is a philosophy professor in Georgetown’s Walsh School of Foreign Service.*

**A Hidden Priest**

One of Dorothy Day’s favorites, Ignazio Silone’s *Bread and Wine* (1936), explores something often overlooked: the shared values that frequently shape secular and religious movements for justice. Pietro Spina, its central character, is a disillusioned 1930s Italian radi-cal pretending to be a priest in order to evade capture by fascist authorities. As the poor and dispossessed seek his spiritual aid, Spina, no longer a believer, unexpectedly rediscovers the Christian inspiration that formed his understanding of human dignity. Spina’s sojourn eventually reunites him with his boyhood mentor, Don Benedetto, a real priest who regards his unbelieving pupil’s secular political activism as “his way of serving God.” This book’s great virtue is that it never sacrifices moral complexity in telling the story of these two men’s painful struggles for justice.

*James P. McCartin is director of the Center on Religion and Culture at Fordham University.*

**Fear’s Walls**

Racism is America’s original sin. Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* requires readers to witness the results created by fear and ignorance of the unfamiliar. Harper Lee’s imaginary Maycomb County in Alabama in 1935 provides prisms through which to study society. The narrator’s childhood fear of a local recluse bookends the fight of her lawyer father to defend a black man wrongly accused of raping a white woman. Atticus Finch makes it clear why: “I couldn’t go to church and worship God if I didn’t try to help that man.” A country where fear and ignorance continue to create walls, real and imagined, between races and classes 50 years after the book was published can still learn from it.

*Tom Curran is associate editor of the Newark Star Ledger.*

**To Uncomfortable Places**

In *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times*, Dean Brackley, S.J., draws deeply upon his personal experiences working with the poor living amidst violence in Central America. This moving interpretation of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius presents us with the challenge of finding a Call—something worth living for that is deeply rooted in love and helping others. Identifying and accepting the Call isn’t easy, especially if we are set on a comfortable path. Brackley guides us in discovering how we might choose a freer, more generous, community-oriented way of life. The issues Brackley raises can take us to uncomfortable places and force us to question our core commitments. However, the process of discovery he unlocks can help us find our place in the projects of civil rights, equality, and justice.

*Diana Owen is in the department of communication, culture and technology at Georgetown University.*

**On Finding God**

A child is born, and shepherds and angels visit him. His parents are confused. He grows up, asks his cousin to baptize him, and finds he has a following. He tells stories. A shepherd with 100 sheep loses one, and he turns all his energies into saving that one. A rich man in purple and linen feasts all day, while a poor man Lazarus covered with sores lies starving at his gate. A traveler finds a robber’s victim in a ditch. Religious leaders have passed him by, but this man binds his wounds and takes him to safety. A father stands on a hilltop every day waiting for a son who took off and threw away his money on a good time to return. The young preacher is crucified and buried, but he begins to appear again in different forms. He meets two travelers on the road who once believed in him, and shows them, at dinner, while breaking bread, how it is that he lives on. Luke’s Gospel has several clear meanings. One is that we must find God in the weak and the poor, in strangers on the road.

*Ray Schroth, S.J., is an associate editor of America magazine; Father Schroth served as editor of Conversations for ten years.*
Liberation theology endeavors to speak of God from the perspective of the poor and suffering of the world and to reconsider the enduring themes of Christian life (i.e., God, Jesus Christ, the Church, sin, grace, salvation, discipleship, etc.) from this radically changed perspective. This approach to theology denounces human suffering caused by unjust political and socio-economic structures as opposing the reign of God and resulting from social sin. Liberation theology begins with the question of how God is manifest in the experience of people who know poverty and oppression. It recognizes the poor as privileged members of the reign of God. The poor, given their condition of poverty, are subjected to lives contrary to what God wills for them. While “the poor and suffering” of liberation theology has been variously interpreted, this phrase originally referred to the economic, materially poor. Gustavo Gutierrez’s *A Theology of Liberation* (1971) launched this new approach to theology.

While the beginnings of liberation theology are most often attributed to its Latin American roots, this perspective is short-sighted. In the 1960s the United States saw the accelerated growth of the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr., which sought racial equality for blacks. Black theology emerged in response and as a critique of how white Christianity in United States is racist and has led to the dehumanization of blacks. James Cone’s book *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969) advanced a black rejection of white racist definitions of blacks and affirmed the gifts and contribution of blacks to Christianity. The civil rights movement of the 1960s also helped to foster groups committed to a feminist consciousness. This contributed to a women’s movement that identified and critiqued sexist and patriarchal social patterns in society. In 1968 Mary Daly published *The Church and the Second Sex*, which advanced a sharp critique of the Catholic Church as sexist and patriarchal. These three threshold books, written within a few years of each other, placed liberation theology on the map as a new way of thinking. For over four decades liberation theology has grown enormously diverse, silencing the naysayers who announced its death during the 1990s. Liberation theologies will continue as long as there are poor and oppressed persons.

Liberation theology will now need to address more intentionally and critically the ways in which market capitalism continues to function as the unquestioned ideology of the globalized world and as the imperial economic system. Certain international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), safeguard an ever-increasing profit margin for wealthy stakeholders at the expense of the economically poor and destitute. These two have institutionalized a neoliberal market ideology. In our increasingly globalized economic world, nation states have become much more beholden to market interests and far less accountable to their citizenry. Liberation theology needs, as Joerg Rieger has argued (*No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics, and the Future*, 2009; and *Beyond the Spirit of Empire: Theology and Politics in a New Key*, 2009), to rethink the context in which we do theology, recognizing empire and economics as part and parcel of the air we breathe. We need liberation theologies to be in
conversations with economists like Amartya Sen to rethink the nature of the systemic evils that give rise to poverty, famine, and trauma. In the early days of liberation theology, theologians argued about the possibility of the economic development of poor nations and about the value of a Marxian analysis. Today, empire and economics set the agenda for the conversation.

Initially, Latin American liberation theology focused narrowly on class and economic hierarchies. Obviously these remain essential. Today, however, the flourishing of liberation theologies is to be found in work that takes seriously not only classism but also its confluence with sexism, racism, heterosexism, anthropocentrism, and ethnocentrism, among others. Of particular importance is the way these various social sins overlap with one another in several settings. Liberation theology must continue to seek out more adequate ways of addressing the complexity and confluence of social sins. For example, the books of Ivone Gebara masterfully critique poverty, sexism, and ecological devastation as it is experienced by many Brazilian women as well as women throughout Latin America (Out of the Depths: Women’s Experience of Evil and Salvation, 2002; and Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation, 1999). Similarly, the writings of Silvia Regina de Lima Silva take up not only classism and sexism but also racism, as can been seen in her claim that the bodily experience of Brazilian black women helps us to understand Jesus Christ (“Dialogue of Memories: Ways Toward a Black Feminist Christology from Latin America” in Feminist Intercultural Theology, 2007). The philosophy of interculturality, which is today being used by many liberation theologians, offers an intellectual vision and way of life that can guide this theology’s response to the confluence of social sins. Interculturality foregrounds the historical context of distinct groups of people and then values how these groups might “live together” transnationally, not in a spirit of mere toleration but rather out of a call to grow precisely by being in relation with one another. Consider the theoretical work of Raul Fornet-Betancourt on interculturality (Filosofar Para Nuestro Tiempo en Clave Intercultural, 2004).

Finally, for liberation theology to retain its prophetic edge, as Marcella Althaus-Reid argues, it must discover its foundation in “an epistemology from the poor,” in other words, the knowing that emerges out of the daily struggles of people who are poor, the knowing that comes from their desire and effort to provide food, shelter, and education for their children, the knowing that comes from their drive to participate in collective decision-making about what matters most in their daily life; and the like (“¿Bién Sonados? The Future of Mystical Connections in Liberation Theology,” Political Theology, no. 3, 2000).

This kind of knowing is vital because, failing this, liberation theology ends up privileging the idea of poor people more than poor people themselves. The option for the poor, accordingly, becomes a romantic abstraction, one that glosses over, erases, and renders alien the historical experience of poor people. The constant challenge for liberation theology is to figure out how to stay grounded in the concrete life of poor people. For example, much of Latin American liberation theology still does not take the insights of feminist theology seriously in its economic analysis even though the majority of poor people in Latin America are women. The concreteness of poverty in Latin America has not been allowed to challenge the patriarchal mindset that still dominates so much of Latin American liberation theology. Obviously, the work of theologians like Ivone Gebara and other Latin American feminists are an exception to this, but their contributions are still not integral to the work of the overwhelming majority of male Latin American theologians. For the most part these theologians are still blind to their own androcentric bias.

Liberation theology in the decades to come will need to address these and other challenges if it is to remain faithful to its ground-breaking insight, that is, to write theology as if poor and oppressed people mattered.
Billions of people try to survive on less than $2/day. In 2008, the number was 2.44 billion, which is 36% of a total world population of 6.7 billion. The number of people living in “absolute poverty,” which is defined as living on less than $1.25, was 1.274 billion, 19% of the world population. The focus of this article is alleviation of such absolute poverty.

Absolute poverty is not the only kind of poverty. The poor in rich countries suffer from relative poverty. In the United States an individual with an income below $11,139 is classified as poor. Per day this is $30.51. The relatively poor in the United States suffer marginalization and stereotyping. They lack goods and services those who are not poor take for granted.

The number of absolutely poor people is shocking in itself and even more so when compared to the 2011 total of accumulated world wealth and the year’s total economic production. The amounts are huge, even staggering: Credit Suisse’s 2012 Global Wealth Report asserts that total household wealth amounted to $US 223 trillion. According to the CIA World Factbook of Nov. 13, 2012, the economic value added in the whole world totaled $US 79.39 trillion (in purchasing power parity terms).

The total annual production and accumulated wealth distributed equally would amount to $11,900 per year, or $32.60 per day. The sum of world production and wealth would more than insure that everyone’s material needs are adequately met. But it needs to be redistributed. Redistribution on this scale is not practicable, however, without turning the world economy upside down. And while such a simple redistribution of a year’s output might give the very poor the money to buy food, clothing, and shelter, it would render them dependent: giving fish, rather than teaching to fish. In any case, redistribution on this or even a much lesser scale is not likely to happen. How many people in rich countries would be willing to drastically reduce their per-capita income to what is the current poverty line in the United States?

Whether large-scale redistribution is owed as a matter of justice to poor people and poor countries (apart from its feasibility and likelihood) is nonetheless an important question. Are those who are desperately poor victims of theft? We who are rich might well plead innocent to this charge. But do not our current riches depend on our ancestors’ crimes? Did not countries that grew rich, such as the U.K., Netherlands, Spain, France, Germany, and the United States, do so at the expense of the peoples they conquered, colonized, even enslaved? Karl Marx, for one, described the development of capitalism as based on the exploitation of workers by owners of the means of production. Lenin and others expanded Marx’s analysis to include colonialism as exploitation of poor nations by rich nations. Gustavo Gutierrez seems to agree: “In the Bible poverty is a scandalous condition inimical to human dignity and therefore contrary to the will of God.” The Bible expresses “indignation” at poverty and “the cause of poverty…the injustice of oppressors” (A Theology of Liberation).

To ask for the causes of mass poverty assumes that people, if not very rich, are at least moderately well off and that something has happened that impoverishes them, namely, conquest, oppression, or natural disasters. What if most people, in most places, in most of recorded history were materially poor? Then the important question is: “How did some few people in some few places grow materially rich?” What if the immense wealth of rich countries is not stolen but produced by them? Nathan Rosenberg and L.E. Birdzell’s How the West

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Grew Rich and others show that it is not poverty but wealth that calls for an explanation. According to them, throughout world history mass poverty has been the norm:

If we take the long view of human history and judge the economic lives of our ancestors by modern standards, it is a story of almost unrelieved wretchedness. The typical human society has given only a small number of people a human existence, while the great majority have lived in abysmal squalor. Only during the last two hundred years has there come to Western Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, and a few other places one of history's infrequent periods when progress and prosperity have touched the lives of somewhat more than the upper tenth of the population.

The change is from the situation where only a small minority were wealthy and the vast majority poor to one where a majority were well-off (if not very wealthy) and a minority poor: “The West's achievement was not the abolition of poverty but the reduction of its incidence from 90 percent of the population to 30 percent, 20 percent, or less.”

To frame mass poverty in these terms makes poverty alleviation primarily a matter of increasing economic production, not simply redistributing what has already been produced. What eliminates absolute poverty is rapid and sustained economic growth that is widely shared. Economies that grow relatively rapidly over many years grow out of mass poverty. The enemy of the poor is not the rich but situations and structures that prevent or hinder economic growth (See Paul Collier's The Bottom Billion). For example, in 1960 South Korea had a per-capita GDP of $291.08, which was 10.05% of that of the U.S., and Zimbabwe had a per-capita GDP of $53.40, 1.84% of the U.S.’s. South Korea experienced rapid economic growth for the next 50 years, and by 2010 it had a per-capita income of $28,768.22, or 61.78% of U.S.’s. Zimbabwe over these years did not grow consistently; some years the economy contracted (between 2000 and 2008), and by 2010 it had a per-capita GDP of $369.15, or .79% of the U.S.’s (Penn World Tables, 2012).

In addition to South Korea, countries that have escaped mass poverty include Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Indonesia (East Asian Economic Miracle). Rapid growth in these East Asian countries and China between 1981 and 2008 reduced the percentage of people living in absolute poverty there from 77% to 14% (World Bank, Poverty Reduction and Equity, 2012). In China alone, more than 663 million people were lifted out of extreme poverty in these years (World Bank, 2012). And these countries did it by high rates of economic growth.

This is not to claim that redistribution has no role to play in poverty alleviation. For countries that have grown economically rich, social justice for the relatively poor requires redistribution from the rich. The alleviation of relative poverty comes from redistribution. The focus of this brief article, however, has been the alleviation of absolute poverty; economic growth has been and continues to be necessary to overcome this kind of poverty.
In 2012, we both decided to participate in *Collegium: A Colloquy on Faith and Intellectual Life* at St. John’s University, and it was there that we discovered our shared interest in service learning, social justice, and metacognitive reflection. We realized that we were both using our respective cities, Baltimore and Denver, as canvases to find, tell, document, and archive compelling stories. We designed our courses to be a lens through which our students can “see” both the city and themselves in a different and perhaps more interesting way. Dr. Kaye Whitehead’s course, “Baltimore Stories,” is an upper-level service-learning production course that is offered in the spring semester. In addition to the normal course offerings, the students volunteer for two hours per week at a women’s shelter in downtown Baltimore. Dr. Jason Taylor’s two-semester sequence includes “Writing for Social Justice” and “Philosophical Explorations” as parts of the first-year experience. In addition, students enroll both semesters in a one-credit course which houses a three-to-four hour weekly commitment at a service-learning placement and a weekly discussion section devoted to reflection on their placement experience.

**Baltimore Stories**

The main goal in all of my classes is to teach and train my students how to use their pen, camera, or voice to focus the world’s attention on social justice issues. In the course where my students spend time working with and learning from women who are experiencing homelessness, I am also interested in helping the students develop a community where the open exchange of knowledge and resources can easily and naturally occur. I am committed to teaching students how to use the tools of our trade to bring clarity out of confusion by addressing issues of social justice in their work.

At the beginning of the semester, the students are often uncomfortable, confused, and in some cases overwhelmed after talking to the women and volunteering in the kitchen at My Sister’s Place, a women’s shelter. Although they come into class knowing that inequities and social injustice exist, they do not have a visceral understanding of what this actually means and how this knowledge would then frame their experience. After working in the kitchen for two weeks, the students are partnered with a woman from the shelter, and their assignment is to record the woman’s story and produce a multimedia story based on it.

Since they are spending time at the shelter, in class, and with the woman, I use three different metacognitive strategies to help them synthesize their experiences: bi-weekly partner reflections, which are written and shared with both their community partner and with me; monthly peer lectures, where students present their research and reflections to their classmates; and a digital stories notebook, which every student must keep and which provides them with a space to think through and reflect on new material, their digital story, and their volunteer experience. The students are encouraged to be very creative with their digital story and to include their partner in the final decision-making process.

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**Denver Stories**

In my sequence of courses, I seek to combine an introduction to the traditional ideal of *eloquentia perfecta*—the good person writing and speaking well—with direct engagement in the community outside of class. In past teaching, I have found that the integration of head, heart, and hands possible in service learning is a powerful way to connect students to communities beyond the walls of the academy. I have also found that such connections meaningfully impact the work we do together within the academy. As a way of strengthening those connections, in the current courses I have been exploring the potential in adding “voice” to that integration of head, heart, and hands.

In the spring semester, students offer two versions of a “critical incident presentation,” first as a traditional speech and then in digital storytelling format. In this presentation, students give a detailed account of and reflection on one episode or a series of connected episodes at their placements which have significantly challenged or changed their perspective. Although the stories in these presentations are told from the students’ perspectives and necessarily focus on their response to critical events, those stories cannot be told without also telling the stories of others with whom they relate at their placements. The final presentation is inevitably complex, tracing the impact that others have on our own lives and attempting to communicate that impact to others in a way that might affect them too. In order to be equal to this complexity, we take practices familiar from the fall writing seminar (in-class peer review and faculty-student conferences outside of class). I also ask students to write a summary reflection comparing the communication potential in each medium relative to the rhetorical occasion of the presentation.

These presentations are about critical reflection. They ask students to think and to talk explicitly about the connection between their service experience and matters of significance that exceed that experience. However, as I suggested above, giving public voice to that reflection might more broadly serve to change the way students conceive of the connection they already have to the broader community.

My hope is that by combining service learning with a traditional classroom environment, my students will learn how to be advocates for social justice. I do everything that I can to teach my students to be extremists for justice, extremists for social change, extremists armed with both compassion and competence who are committed to using their unique oneness to move mountains, initiate change, and ultimately be the change that they want to see in the world. This, then, is the essence of my course: to teach my students how to recognize, challenge, and change injustices.

*Baltimore Stories* can be viewed at http://bmorestories.net/projects/my-sisters-place/

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A Neighborhood Partnership

One Model for Transformative Justice

By Kent Koth

As at many Jesuit institutions of higher education, Seattle University’s mission statement and core values speak to its service to society and commitment to social justice. For many years the university drew upon this mission to engage students in academic service learning, volunteer activities, internships, practicums, and other forms of community engagement. But in 2011 the university expanded its community engagement commitment to a much larger mission. Drawing upon programs like the Harlem Children’s Zone, the university launched the Seattle University Youth Initiative. This initiative, the largest community engagement project in the university’s history, has experienced initial success and is becoming a signature element. This article presents a brief overview of the initiative’s planning and implementation, current successes and challenges, and several lessons learned.

In 2007 a University trustee asked a simple question: If Seattle University were to focus its community engagement efforts on a particular topic, neighborhood, or issue, could it make more of a measurable impact on the community? Intrigued by the question, President Stephen Sundborg, S.J., gathered a small group of university leaders to explore ideas. What followed was a three-year planning effort that engaged hundreds of campus and community members in a process that moved from a vague concept to a specific plan focusing on the crisis of educational inequality.

The first goal of the youth initiative is to dramatically improve the academic achievement of 1,000 low-income students living in a neighborhood immediately adjacent to campus, one of the most diverse and impoverished communities in Seattle. The university is pursuing this goal by partnering with the City of Seattle, Seattle Public Schools, Seattle Housing Authority, and with over 30 non-profit organizations to create a “cradle-through-college” pipeline of educational resources for neighborhood children and their families.

The second goal of the youth initiative is to transform the education of Seattle University students by further mobilizing them to serve and learn through academic service learning, community-based research, internships, practicums, work-study, and volunteer activities.

Focusing on these two goals, the initiative has attained several noteworthy initial successes, which include:

1. Extended Learning. The university has worked with five local nonprofits to extend the school day by two hours for 180 Bailey Gatzert Elementary School students. The after-school program did not exist until 2010. Initial results, based upon the district’s Measure of Academic Progress (MAP), suggest that participating students increased math scores by 29% and reading scores by 13%. In addition, in 2011-2012, Gatzert Elementary School had the highest academic growth rate of any school in Seattle.

2. Expanded Services. Seattle University partnered with Seattle Housing Authority to obtain a $30 million “Choice Neighborhood” grant. Part of this grant provides over two million dollars for early learning, summer learning, and college prep programs for neighborhood children. Through the grant, during summer 2012 the university also mobilized ten community organizations to offer summer learning and enrichment activities to over 300 neighborhood children, a 100% increase in summer learning participation from 2011.

3. University-wide Engagement. The university expanded and developed new partnerships to provide 250 neighborhood children and families with services such as health education, financial literacy, citizenship tutoring, tax assistance, parent engagement workshops, and early learning. This involved the university’s creating 40 new service and research projects. The university also mobilized 47 faculty from 28 disciplines to engage 1018 Seattle University students in the neighborhood through 96 service-learning courses, representing a 75% increase in student participation since 2010.

While attaining positive initial results, the youth initiative has also faced challenges. For example, the initiative’s success depends completely on multiple campus and community partners working together to deliver results. Aligning partners with different organizational cultures, motivations, reward systems, and funding sources is, in fact, very difficult. Another challenge has been navigating the power imbalances that arise from differences in economic class, culture, race, religion, gender, and nationality. The university, its partners, and neighborhood residents must adopt a high degree of cultural competency to overcome these barriers. This ongoing challenge is also a tremendous educational opportunity.

Still another challenge has been acquiring adequate resources during a time of tremendous financial challenge. The university provides base operating support, but two thirds of the initiative’s $1.2 million dollar budget comes from outside, which requires thoughtful fund development and stewardship strategies.

For institutions of higher education wishing to embark on a major place-based community engagement effort, the Seattle University Youth Initiative can provide several major lessons. One is that a comprehensive university-wide community engagement initiative requires thoughtful and inclusive planning. Seattle University took almost three years to move the initial idea to implementation. This thorough planning process led to significant ownership from many partners, which has made it much easier to move quickly and attain success in the initial implementation phase.

Another central lesson is that success requires carefully balancing community impact and campus engagement. If the effort becomes too focused on the students’ learning experience, then the community will become disillusioned, question the university’s motives, and eventually cease to participate. Conversely, if the work overemphasizes the external focus on creating an educational pipeline for local children, university leaders may question why the institution should be involved at all. The success of the initiative depends on how the two goals dovetail and complement each other. A delicate balance!

While it has only been two years since its launch and five years since the initial planning phase began, the Seattle University Youth Initiative is beginning to transform the local neighborhood and the campus. This is the good news. But there is much more to be done. As the initiative matures it must build upon the original foundations. This means significant additional planning as well as the willingness for campus departments and community organizations to coordinate activities while remaining true to their identity and purpose. By doing so, the youth initiative will successfully offer an example for other institutions to draw upon in our collective Jesuit pursuit of the faith that does justice.

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CANISIUS COLLEGE
One of the central points that drew me to Boston College as I began to pursue graduate studies in American history was its Jesuit identity. Having been influenced so deeply by my Jesuit high school and undergraduate experiences, I felt it was the best fit for me and the way I wanted to frame my future praxis as a historian. Having now completed my first year of studies, it is clear to me that BC works very hard to negotiate the tension between its obligations as both a Jesuit and a world-class research university. Having now completed my first year of studies, it is clear to me that BC works very hard to negotiate the tension between its obligations as both a Jesuit and a world-class research university. I have witnessed many of the programmatic efforts in this ongoing affair firsthand, working as a graduate assistant in the school’s Office of University Mission and Ministry. In this capacity I have become familiar with the abundance of opportunities to engage with the school’s Jesuit foundations available to the BC community. To name a few, these include the Arrupe International Immersion Program, the Intersections Project, and Halftime retreats. The people who run these programs care deeply about the work that they do, and the result is nothing short of impressive. It has been a real joy and an education unto itself to be a small cog in these wheels.

Juxtaposed to my experience in Mission and Ministry have been my graduate studies in history. In the culture of the department, there is what I can best describe as a noteworthy indifference to the school’s Jesuit underpinnings. The school’s heritage is a non-factor. Now, this culture shock was not a complete surprise, even for a zealous proponent of Jesuit pedagogy like me. I fully understand that my studies are meant to prepare me to be a historian first, and that my training is shaped by the dictates of the wider historical enterprise. I would be dreaming to think that Pedro Arrupe or Dean Brackley would surface in classroom conversations as frequently as Foner or Foucault! Still, I have found this absence of BC’s Jesuit identity within my studies a conundrum worth further examination.

I have spent considerable time this past year—often with more pressing assignments looming!—contemplating this tension between preparation for the demands of the historical profession and the school’s Jesuit identity. Is there a way they can constructively support one another? Can drawing

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upon the university's Jesuit ideals also enrich the training received by history graduate students at BC? In my reflections, I have come to two concrete proposals on how this might be achieved.

First, I propose the creation and institutionalization of space within the department for the purpose of reflection. Practically speaking, once or twice a month a room could be reserved for interested graduate students and faculty alike to discuss larger vocational questions over the requisite coffee and baked goods. For example: Why do we study history? What does it mean to be a historian? What are our goals, and where does a degree fit within them? I know that these conversations happen every day within the department, but never in an organized way. These conversations are central to our training, but they are largely a matter of time and circumstances. These greater questions are also often moved to the back burner as the semester proceeds and the workload intensifies.

It is no secret that the world of higher education is ripe with change and worries over developments like the rise of MOOC’s, a shrinking professorial job market, and the ever-fermenting popular resentment over the price of a college education. Add to these the worries of the historical field in particular, as well as the day-to-day demands of class and research. Throw in the challenges of living on a graduate student stipend, and that makes for a whole lot to think and potentially worry about! As such, the creation of an intentional space for reflection and discernment would, I feel, be a boon to many a graduate student who might not make the time for introspection otherwise. Even while the reflection questions will most likely not use specifically Ignatian language or talk of Jesuit education, I think carving out such a time and space within the department would be a practical programmatic improvement as well as a distinctly Jesuit exercise, given the centrality of discernment and reflection to Jesuit spirituality and pedagogy.

My second proposal stems from an email one Jesuit from my undergraduate years wrote to me upon hearing of my acceptance to BC. Within his congratulations he urged me to find some sort of local service to pursue, writing that, “While they [your studies] are crucially important...they cannot become 100% of your focus, for the rest of the world continues to exist.”

I have since learned that the rigors of archival research and ever-expanding reading lists can easily consume one’s life as a graduate student, making for an insular existence that often borders on hermetic. This serves to perpetuate the often-levied criticism that higher education is inward-looking, as embodied in the notorious ivory tower caricature. I have managed to make a commitment to work in a soup kitchen, but it would be unrealistic to demand that my cohorts in the department all partake in similar ventures. Instead, I believe that a commitment to local history might serve as a constructive response to some of these aforementioned charges and challenges, while simultaneously tapping into Jesuit values.
For example, resources within the department could be committed to an ongoing oral history project. A relatively small amount of funding could incentivize a few students to reach out to various groups and communities in the Boston area to collect their stories and recollections as they pertain to historical events or developments. From a more strictly history-department point of view, this effort would yield a rich resource for future research (similar to the famed WPA slave narratives), and it would furthermore give graduate students an expanded opportunity to hone their skills in oral history collection. This would also challenge the ivory tower stereotype.

Additionally, such a project would encourage students to authentically engage with the surrounding community and hear the stories and lived experiences of individuals in ways they might otherwise not have over the course of their studies. By creating new bonds and actively working to preserve the city’s history, a commitment to local history would be an experience in service that would not only supplement historical training. This sort of project would also be a unique answer to the call for the promotion of justice and the formation of women and men for others that is so central to a Jesuit education.

As I hope to make these proposals concrete actions, it remains to be seen whether they will gain traction within my history world, and I am very prepared that these efforts may not bear any fruit. Either way, I am thankful for the opportunity to explore this tension between my graduate training and BC’s Jesuit identity, as well as for the length of my training, which gives me time to think of other ideas should these not work!

Eloquentia Perfecta in the Digital Age

By Patrick L. Gilger, S.J.

For Jesuit basketball supporters, the madness is ending as I write. No longer will we contribute to the estimated loss of four million productive work hours by watching, for example, the Marquette men’s basketball team—the last standing Jesuit school in the annual pit of productivity quicksand that is the NCAA tournament—on our work computers. Marquette just had the life crushed from them by the Orangemen of Syracuse. But after reading the last issue of Conversations, it’s clear that the same cannot also be said of the liveliness of eloquentia perfecta in Jesuit universities.

In making a contemporary case for eloquentia perfecta, that issue pointed out that much of what was always true of good predigital rhetoric remains true of good digital rhetoric. Two points regarding this continuity are particularly important. First, as Paul Lynch gracefully reminded us, rhetoric remains the tool for discerning the “available means of persuasion” in a given situation. While the available means and the problems to be overcome change, the demand that we evaluate our options with care in order to proceed with efficacy remains. Second, the tight bond between the cultivation of rhetorical skill and the cultivation of good character remains a goal of Jesuit rhetorical education. It was John O’Malley who noted that such character formation is shaped by the same perennial questions “of life and death, of virtue and vice.” And Stephen Mailloux noted that in classical rhetoric it is the good person who is able to speak well for the common good. Both of these traits remain the same.

But what has changed? We might hypothesize that if it’s not the essence or the ends of rhetoric that have changed, then it must be the means. And this is partially true. Persuasion is certainly accomplished through different means in the digital age: the constraints of the 6-second Vine video and 140-character Tweets are both new. But neither is fundamentally different from the constraints of, say, the sonnet. It seems to me that what has changed more substantially is not just the means themselves, but the increasingly small number of ways we are willing to allow ourselves to be open to persuasion. In other words, when considering the ideal of eloquentia perfecta for Jesuit educators in the digital age, we ought to consider not just how digital technology provides different conduits

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for interaction but also how those conduits have affected what it is that makes something persuasive or not. In a digital age, the way we receive information has itself changed what counts as persuasive.

For example, the “narrowcasting” of content, to use Diana Owen’s articulate descriptor, is unique not just because it targets audiences precisely, but because of what it reveals about the kind of content people (read: ourselves, our colleagues, our students) are willing to receive at all. Digital technology encourages the tendency to enter into echo chambers of the like-minded. But the bigger effect may be that it has raised our consciousness of being the targets of coercive attention. We filter out “rhetoric” (in the colloquial, pejorative sense) because we are increasingly immersed—all of us—in the kind of world where we are constantly barraged by attempts to persuade us. And the vast majority of these attempts at persuasion have absolutely nothing to do with forming us to be good persons who speak well for the common good. The task of Jesuit educators in a digital age is so difficult because, in order to function well in such a world, we have all turned our B/S filters up to 11. We have developed a practiced invulnerability when it comes to persuasion.

The brilliant (and much missed!) John Kavanaugh taught us that it is advertisers who have most effectively discerned the available means of persuasion in this environment. But since we have all become aware of their skill, advertisers must use increasingly nonsensical, self-aware, or sensational advertising to grab our attention. The problem for Jesuit educators attempting to be persuasive is twofold: Advertisers are much better at this than we are; and we must persuade students to allow us through their “rhetoric” filters—or draw them out from behind them—to accomplish the character formation that Jesuit education, at its best, attempts.

All this to say that we are immersed in a context that makes it very, very difficult to conceive of an eloquentia to which the adjective perfecta can even be applied—because the primary kind of “character formation” through persuasion we normally experience is actually manipulation. Our students and we ourselves as well don’t really think of ourselves being made better through exposure to rhetoric, because being made better means trusting that there is a true end, a good which is really good for us and toward which both persuaders and persuadees ought to direct themselves.

So it will come as no surprise that I believe that our task as Ignatian educators ought to be to foster in our students the ability to imagine an end toward which their character can be formed and thus allow the difference between manipulation and persuasion to come to light once again. Whether this happens, as John O’Malley put it, through the classical technique of “introducing them to cultures not their own…and by thus giving them a sense of the wide possibilities of the human spirit” or through the liturgies and sacraments and theological thinking that also characterize our institutions is a discussion for another time. But, in my opinion, the ability to imagine the perfectibility of the human spirit and the difference between manipulation and persuasion which it reveals ought to be our task.

It is just this task that The Jesuit Post, a website staffed by Jesuits in formation around the country (of which I am a cofounder), is attempting to accomplish. We approach eloquentia perfecta in the digital age in typical Ignatian fashion, by pointing out how God is already at work even in the confusing and apparently God-barren stuff of our world—in pop culture, politics, sports, philosophy, and even advertising. It is our attempt to show that behind even the strongest rhetorical filter there is not only marketing manipulation but also reason for hope, a Spirit already eloquently pursuing our own perfection.

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A Note to Contributors

HOW TO WRITE FOR CONVERSATIONS

The goal of the National Seminar on Jesuit Higher Education and its publication of Conversations is to strengthen the Jesuit identity of our 28 colleges and universities. First, each issue is written to stimulate the campus dialogue — through departmental discussions or faculty symposiums — on the pursuit of various ideals. Second, through our various departments — feature articles, forums, book reviews, reports, and Talking Back — we want to keep the conversation going to build on the progress we have made.

Our ten faculty members, representing various institutions and disciplines, visit three colleges and universities a year and listen to groups of faculty and students in order to decide the themes for each issue. Although most of the articles are commissioned, we welcome unsolicited manuscripts. Ideally they should explore an idea that will generate discussion rather than describe a worthy project at an institution.

Writing Guidelines. Please keep the article to fewer than 2000 words. DO NOT include footnotes.

Incorporate any references into the text. Don’t capitalize: chairman of the biology department, names of committees, or administrative titles unless the title precedes the name: President Woodrow Wilson. We welcome photographs, fully captioned, preferably of action rather than posed shots. Send by CD containing digital images scanned at not less than 300 dpi or by online download. Send the ms as a Microsoft WORD attachment to conversamag@gmail.com.

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COMING UP Issue #45 (January 2014) Suppression, Restoration, Reinvention: Turning Points in Jesuit Higher Education in the U.S.
Graphic design students Michelle Conner, Melissa Garcia, Kim Nichols, Yiting Cao, Fredrick Norfleet, and Allison Patrick from Spring Hill College present brochures to Mobile Botanical Gardens, Mobile, Alabama, as part of the “Community through Art and Design” initiative.

Coming in January 2014: #45 Suppression, Restoration, Reinvention: Turning Points in Jesuit Higher Education in the U.S.