

Obsculta

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Editorial Comments

Lauren L. Murphy

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University

Genevieve L. Mougey

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University

Kendall A. Ketterlin

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University

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Kendall A. Ketterlin, Lauren L. Murphy, Genevieve L. Mougey

Deo Gratias

People familiar with Benedictines will immediately recognize the title of this journal: *Obsculta*. This word opens the Rule of St. Benedict. The full verse translates, “Listen carefully, my [child], to the master’s instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart.” This verse is a command to attentiveness and activity. Benedict does not ask for a passive listening, but one that is transformative and life-giving.

At the School of Theology we are engaged in such listening every day. The work in this journal is evidence of that. We listen to our classmates, our friends, our professors, our books. We listen to Scripture, tradition, and experience. We listen to the world. And when we listen, we cannot help but be transformed.

My listening, and the listening of many people, led to the creation of this journal. Little did I know, as a prospective student speaking with Dean Cahoy, that the publication we briefly mentioned during our first meeting would become a reality. It has, and that, for me, is a dream come true. I would like to take this opportunity to offer my gratitude to some people, for without them and their attentiveness, this journal would not have happened.

Genevieve—Your constant attention to the mission of *Obsculta* served to remind us that this journal is more than a good idea; it is a response to a call.

Kendall—Your practical approach kept me grounded and on task. I appreciate your enthusiasm for this project and the way you just jumped in.

Bill Cahoy—Not only did you let us start a pub-

lication for the school, you have trusted us to create a work of integrity. Thank you for the freedom to realize this dream.

Kathleen A. Cahalan—Your willingness to be the faculty adviser for this project is much appreciated. You added your voice when we needed it and supported us in the decisions we made.

Rose Beauclair—You have a vision for this journal that makes me happy. Your questions and insights have been challenging and the journal is the better for it.

Faculty and Staff of the SOT—Your encouragement for this project has meant the world to me. Your questions about the progress of the journal let us know that you care about the work that we do.

Students of the SOT—Because of your good work, we don’t have 44 pages of emptiness. Thank you to all of you who submitted pieces for the journal. I am continually amazed by the engaging and insightful work that you do. This journal exists because of you.

Finally, Lea Murphy and Julie Surma—My mother assisted in preparing the photographs for publication. Julie patiently answered my questions about the computer program used for the layout of the journal. Their expertise is much appreciated.

As you read through the work in these pages, may you be inspired, encouraged, and challenged. *Obsculta*.

obsacula

Perceptions

Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the mornings, what you will do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

(Pedro Arrupe, SJ)

These are the words from Pedro Arrupe that brought me to Saint John's. I spent much time before moving here thinking about where my heart was. Was it really in ministry? Discernment to me has taken on a specifically Benedictine heart since I have come to Saint John's. I recognize that I am mixing my Catholic traditions—Jesuit and Benedictine—but both embody to me the desire to place the language of God within human grasp. Words are so important to me. They have the ability to convey love, hate, vulnerability, sorrow, and profound joy. There are times in life when they are carelessly thrown around, and other moments when there are not enough to share. Very few moments in my life can be recalled when I don't remember the words that were stated that inspired great emotion. I recall how I told my first lie. (I was two, I did write on the wall, I did try to blame it on my older sister, and my mother was able to snap me like a twig—in a very loving way, of course!) There are many instances in which we use words to inform our practices and experiences. We use them so much, and trade them back and forth with such fluidity that we are able to distance ourselves from their very costly nature.

As an undergrad English major I was able to explore in great depth my love for the written word. Flannery O'Connor, William Shakespeare, Henry David Thoreau, Jane Austen; all of these and many other literary geniuses formed my understanding of the power of words. I learned that when used in the right order, words are more powerful than any other force humanity can create.

When I first heard about the project of beginning a School of Theology publication I was excited, intrigued, and perhaps a bit skeptical. Yet I knew I needed to be a part of this endeavor. This project is

a reflection of many different people, their dreams and ambitions, as well as my own. In pursuing this publication, I was made to realize my own dreams and the steps needed to make those a reality.

With my involvement in *Obsculta*, I decided to pursue this project with a style typical to Benedictine living. The integrity that is fundamental to the core learning at the SOT•Sem would need to be transferred authentically to this project. Also, there would need to be an audacious spirit that could be felt and recognized when first glimpsing this work. Finally, this would be accomplished through deliberate pursuit of the scholarly work that is done in the School of Theology. There is one phrase from a famous poem that I have the opportunity to see every day that I go to work at the School of Theology offices. I wish to share those words with you. As you read this first publication, think of the men and women who have lived deliberately, with integrity, and have had the audacious desire to pursue their heart's desires; recognize that this happens every day in the School of Theology at Saint John's University.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, to discover that I had not lived. (Henry David Thoreau)

Genevieve Mougey



In the Woods

Genevieve L. Mougey

And the Word became Flesh

When people first get to know me, it does not take long to find out that I spend a lot of my time at a local coffee shop. Not only is a good cup of coffee one of the most beautiful miracles in life, but what I enjoy even more is that when I walk through the front door, I never know who I'm going to meet on any given night. Several years ago, in the days immediately after the attacks of September 11, I met a biker on his way from Nevada to New York. His name was Kevin and he had several friends who lived and worked in the area right around the Trade Center. For the past three days, he had been trying to get in touch with them on the phone, but was having no luck. Too much chaos, and too many people trying to get in touch with their own loved ones. Kevin wasn't worried though, just anxious to get back to see his friends and the city he had grown up in. Our conversation quickly turned to the Bible I was reading and the word of God. Kevin's idea was that the Word that John wrote about was literally the word: the gift of language, ability to speak, to read, and to write. Humanity came into this world speaking and sharing one language; through sin and pride, that language, and our ability to share with one another, became confused.

Kevin was saying that God comes out when we share our stories with other people, much like he and I were doing that night. His vision may not match a cultural exegesis of John's gospel, but I've always thought that he touched on something extraordinary. It's an intimate relationship when we open ourselves and bring that treasure to another person. By simply telling our story to another person—our thoughts, feelings, and ideas—we are helping to bring God into the world.

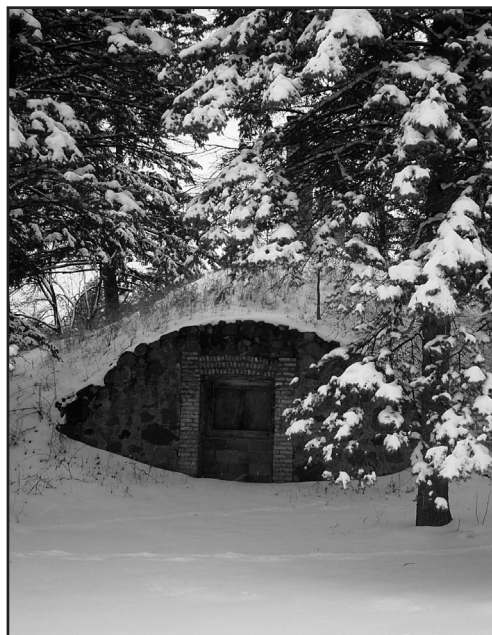
The desire to share our stories is what inspired me to knock on Lauren's door last summer with a desire to put together something, some type of publication or on-line forum for students to share the work they have been doing. Over the course of my first two semesters here at Saint John's, I would get excited when I heard people talk about the papers they were working on for class. Whether it was a dis-

cussion on celibacy in the priesthood, reflections on feminist theology, or a deeply personal story about how a person came to believe in Christ, I was always disappointed that there was nowhere for us to share the incredible work we were doing. We would write these papers, they would see a grading pen, and then die. I was astounded when Lauren told me that she had spent much of the last year working to get a student publication going.

It's our stories that are sacred, and sharing them is what *Obsculta* means for me, opening ourselves with one another and breaking open our community.

I am extremely grateful that Lauren and Genevieve let me join in this project, to Kathleen and Bill for their guidance, to the entire School of Theology for your excited support. But most of all, THANK YOU to all of you who submitted works, who took that step of opening your intimate selves and sharing your word with us.

May God bless you and open the treasures of your heart,



Easter
Morning

Kendall A. Ketterlin