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In Deed: A Survey of Programs and Activities Related to Identity and Mission: Loyola College in Maryland

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As a community service project, Fairfield students paint over graffiti and clean Main Street in Bridgeport.

the Retreat in Daily Life—to faculty, administrators and staff. Coordinated by Rev. Joseph Ryan, S.J., the retreat has attracted more participants each year.

At present there are ten retreatants making the retreat, which will run for the duration of the academic year. Each retreatant meets regularly with a director and each month all the retreatants and directors come together for prayer and reflection. The retreat has been a source of interest in the Christian Life Community. Coordinated by Sr. Anne Flood, S.C., the

C.L.C. meets weekly and is made up of faculty, administrators and staff. A C.L.C. for undergraduates is also being formed.

In addition to the 19th Annotation Retreat, Rev. Richard Stanley, S.J., offers a Silent Five-Day Ignatian Retreat three times a year. The retreat is held at the Jesuit Residence.

RESPICE FINEM: THE LAST LECTURE SERIES

What would professors have to say at their very last lecture? Would they give

advice? Would they reminisce? Would they talk primarily about their area of academic expertise? Or would they talk about ultimate things, about spirituality?

The Fairfield University “Last Lecture” series gives students (as well as faculty colleagues) a chance to get to know the lecturer better, and it gives the lecturer an opportunity to focus and articulate his or her own thoughts.

Professors who have lectured so far have been selected from a variety of disciplines, including history, nursing, religious studies and biology.

Loyola College in Maryland Baltimore, Maryland

THE CENTER FOR VALUES AND SERVICE

The act of community service at Loyola College is played out on many different stages: In the inner city, working with the homeless, the hungry, the impoverished, and the illiterate; In rural Mexico, building a school house or working at an orphanage; In Appalachia, 1



Andrew Dalton, Loyola College class of 1995, works with adult learners at The Learning Bank.

tutoring children and repairing homes for the elderly.

The impressions of students who participate in the college's vast community-service program are just as diverse.

"I didn't think cute little kids could be homeless," one student observed following an evening at an inner city shelter.

"Service makes you focus on yourself so much," noted a male student who served food at a soup kitchen in downtown Baltimore.

"I didn't understand why we were doing what we were doing," said a female student who spent time with AIDS patients. "But

talking about it as a group has made it worthwhile."

Those are precisely the types of responses hoped for by the college officials who established Loyola's Center for Values and Service, the on-campus office that coordinates and oversees the institution's community service initiatives.

Service is a holistic experience at Loyola. It does not simply enable students to feel good about themselves by helping others. It becomes part of their spiritual and intellectual development at the school.

One primary goal of incorporating service into the acade-

mic and spiritual fabric at Loyola is to enable the students "to get beyond the initial experience and to understand what's happening to them and the person being served," says Erin Swezey, co-director of the Center for Values and Service.

Loyola builds upon its Jesuit and Mercy traditions in linking faith with justice. The aim is helping students to develop "habits of service and habits of virtue," according to Fr. Timothy Brown, S.J., who co-directs the Center for Values and Service with Swezey.

Service, of course, is a vital part of the mission at any Jesuit

institution. At Loyola an important and somewhat different ingredient in the service-learning program is the building of partnerships—between Jesuits and the lay community, between those serving and those served, between the college and off-campus neighborhoods, between men and women.

This partnership is exemplified by the working relationship between Fr. Brown and Erin Swezey, by the way they combine their very different backgrounds and personal views into a common vision. "It took our working together and sharing different ideas," says Swezey,

“to establish a more formal structure for these various (service) programs. We saw that there were opportunities if we joined forces in a formal way. The institute would give more resources and we’d be more visible in the community.”

Swezey came to Loyola five years ago to direct the college’s community-service programs. Fr. Brown arrived two years earlier as a member of the faculty. She is the organizer, the nuts-and-bolts person who makes everything fit into place—more than two-thirds of Loyola’s 3,000 students participate in over one hundred community-service programs. Fr. Brown is the idea man who constantly is churning out new ways to enhance the value of service to both the students and the community.

What the two of them most clearly share is the belief that service, spirituality and the college experience are intrinsically linked. “When you teach,” notes Fr. Brown, “you want to allow people to see truth and beauty. The spirituality always gets you back to the basic idea of why we are here. And working with poor people gets you back to those basics: virtue, the desire to see truth and to clear away injustice and greed, and getting to the best in people.”

Loyola sponsored community-service programs for its



Fr. Timothy Brown, S.J. and Erin Swezey, co-directors of The Loyola Center for Values and Service.

students before Swezey and Fr. Brown arrived on campus. But it took the confluence of their ideals, direction and drive to provide the impetus for integrating community service into both the academic and spiritual agendas at Loyola.

“By establishing the more formal structure, we were able to concentrate on the more educational and spiritual aspects of service,” Swezey explains. “And we decided we really needed to be co-directors of the Center (for Values and Service). It speaks to the idea that we’re willing to have a collaborative effort without a hierarchy.”

Fr. Brown believes that one important component of the Loyola partnership is the working relationship between men and women, and that Jesuits can learn new and more benevolent approaches from women. “Focusing on the process of learning and doing things gives us a new perspective,” he explains. “It was there already, in our spirituality, but this partnership brings it out. There was a rugged individuality among Jesuits. With the partnership, we’re much more able to let go of control and the strong personal approach.”

The loosening of control of

which Fr. Brown speaks is manifested in the approach Loyola takes in developing community-service programs. The goal is to work in partnership with the affected community in designing the program, rather than merely imposing it from the outside.

And that, according to Swezey, reflects the idea of collaboration between her and Fr. Brown. “That’s the spirit and vision we carry into the community,” she says. “It’s not, ‘This is what we’re going to do for you.’ It’s more sitting down and talking with people in the program about their needs and capacity and our needs and

capacity. It's a reciprocal relationship."

The Learning Bank is an adult literacy program that grew in response to the needs of the impoverished West Baltimore community in which it was established. Members of the community met and decided they wanted to switch from the one-on-one tutoring system under which the program began eleven years ago to a more formal classroom structure. Today, two dozen Loyola students work with the adult students on their reading and math skills.

Loyola's partnership with The Learning Bank is "a wonderful asset" to the program, says Mary Judith Schmelz, RSM, director of the Learning Bank. "It enables us to provide for our adult learners the kind of individualized attention they need to really make progress."

Community service, of course, can be an end in and of itself. Loyola, however, incorporates the service ideal into a much broader landscape. Service is a teaching tool to help students re-evaluate the purpose of their own lives, to work for advocacy and social change, to seek out the genuine elements in a spiritual life.

About two dozen faculty members incorporate service into their course offerings. Students perform a certain number of hours of service and

discuss the service as it relates to their course of study. They also write papers on the service experience, discussing, for example, what it means to them and how it relates to the course curriculum. For certain courses students can spend even more time in community service and receive a fourth, or extra, credit for their work and their discussion of it. Many students, of course, perform community service without relating it directly to their work in a specific course.

One November afternoon about thirty students who were performing service in conjunction with their course work got together a discussion.

"I felt like I was an invader, that I didn't really belong there," said one student, referring to his walk through a tough section of Baltimore on his way to a soup kitchen. "It was not a place where we belonged, there was an uncomfortableness to it. But then I came to the realization that this was my turf. It's very much a part of my world. It's very easy to separate oneself psychologically from it. But I feel a real interdependence now. 'That's not a place where I belong?' Why not! One thing that I have come to realize is that it's a place where I very much belong."

"When I received the assignment," another student

said, "all these bells and whistles went off about how [I was] going to have to volunteer. Being mandated to serve soup! I said, 'Whoa, how is this going to work if I'm being forced to volunteer?' But this made it a priority for me. Doing it for class was the catalyst for doing it. It wasn't why I did it."

Said another, "Serving in the downtown area gets you out of your routine. For these people who live there, their lives are changing every day. For you, little things don't mean a lot. For them, little things can mean everything."

"I saw people there like my father and me," another student pointed out. "I wanted to find out what got them there—not those that are poor to begin with, their entire lives, but those who became poor more recently. You realize that this could happen to you. It makes me think. I should start thinking about these things day to day, because one day I could be there."

Such comments are common during reflection group sessions at Loyola. It becomes obvious that the act of performing service can be more than just a good deed. It can turn students inward as well as goad them into recognizing that the world they inhabit is not simply one of suburbs and

college campuses. As Fr. Brown describes it, "There are other lenses through which to view the world."

Yet debate still rages at the college about whether or not service has a rightful place as part of the academic curricula. Much depends upon the course of study involved and the commitment of the professor teaching the course.

After three years of formally bringing service into the classroom, Fr. Brown says, "I think everybody's still trying to figure out if and how it works."

Article by Louis Berney

Regis University Denver, Colorado

Regis University educates men and women of all ages to take leadership roles and to make a positive impact in a changing society. Standing within the Catholic and United States traditions, Regis is inspired by the Jesuit vision of Ignatius Loyola. This vision challenges students to attain inner freedom to make intelligent choices. Throughout this process students examine and attempt to answer the fundamental question: "How ought we to live?"