

Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education

Volume 6

Article 11

10-1-1994

In Deed: A Survey of Programs and Activities Related to Identity and Mission: University of San Francisco

Editorial Board

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Recommended Citation

Editorial Board (1994) "In Deed: A Survey of Programs and Activities Related to Identity and Mission: University of San Francisco,"
Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education: Vol. 6, Article 11.
Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol6/iss1/11>

University of San Francisco

San Francisco, California

Integrating Faith with Life

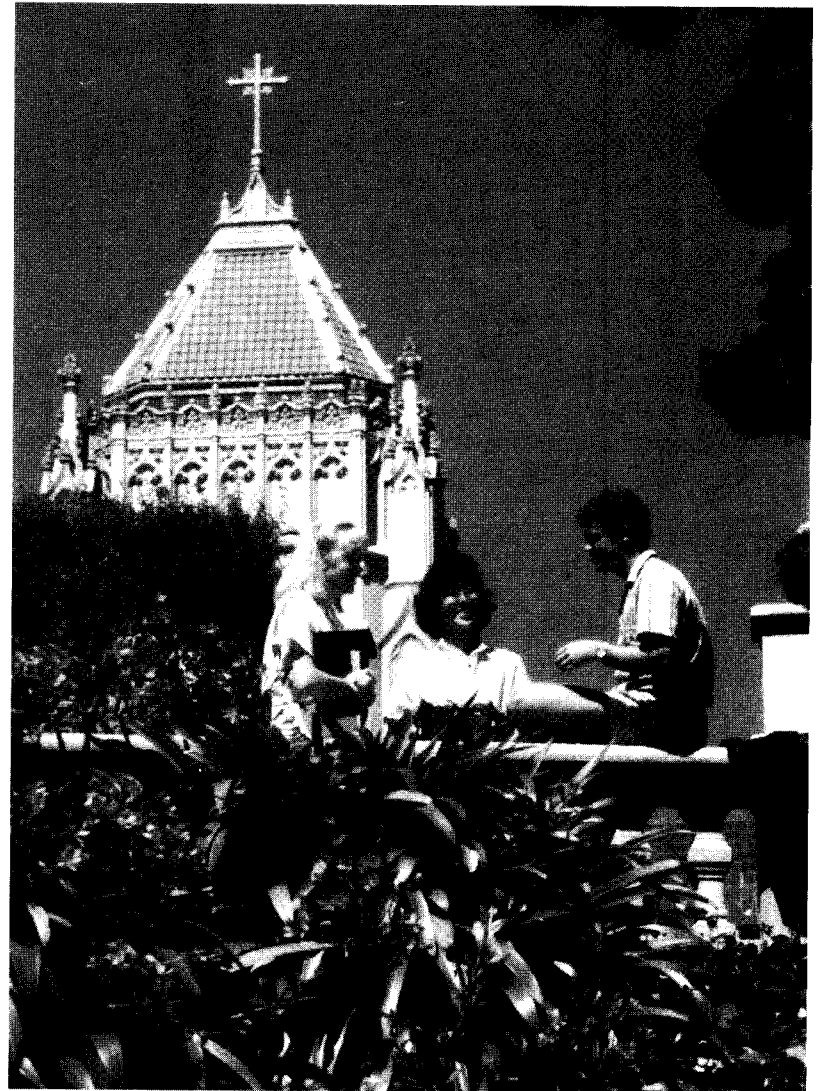
“It is my role as a director to adapt the Spiritual Exercises to each retreatant, in view of age and maturity, education, and also potential and talents. I should decide what exercises would prove useless or even harmful to a retreatant . . . as well as what exercises would benefit and perhaps challenge a retreatant who is properly disposed and endowed.” (The Spiritual Exercises, annotation eighteen.)

“In the rush of our daily lives we often yearn for a few minutes of peace and quiet. And yet, often enough, when we can make the time for such moments, we may become uncomfortable; at the same time we are somehow attracted to the experience. We do not know what to do, we do not know how to undo, let be and let God. In an attempt to fill that void, we are offering an individualized program on the ‘How To’ of prayer.” (Letter of invitation to the University community, February 4, 1994.)

In our attempts to preserve the Catholic, Jesuit identity and mission of our respective colleges and universities, we employ many approaches on our respective campuses. Among other programs, we at USF offer a monthly luncheon series that addresses our Jesuit heritage and its implications for our day-to-day world of education. We sponsor off-campus retreats which

focus on understanding our mission and how we can live it more effectively.

One program in particular deserves special comment. Five years ago the Office of Campus Ministry sponsored the Spiritual Exercises in the form of the Nineteenth Annotation retreat for members of the staff, faculty, and administration. Participants minimally committed themselves to one hour of prayer per day and to weekly meetings with a



director over the course of several months. As good as the experience was for most participants, a number of people were ill-prepared to take on the demands of such a retreat. Some dropped the program in mid-stream. While they certainly were seeking to explore and deepen their relationship with God, they needed less time-consuming, less demanding structures to assist them in their search.

Two years ago we began talking about offering the Exercises again, but our experience made us wary of offering them in the form of the Nineteenth Annotation. The Office of Campus Ministry and the Office of University

Mission developed a program of prayer designed to meet the needs of the busy professionals on our campus. Similar programs were scheduled for the seasons of Advent and Lent. The following describes the Lenten Prayer Program.

We asked participants to commit themselves to fifteen minutes a day in prayer and to meet with a guide once a week for individual, personal direction and guidance. Because prayer is also rooted in community, we provided two kinds of opportunity for participants to draw on that gift: (1) *Daily Liturgy*: The liturgy in the Jesuit community chapel was focused especially in theme and homily toward those in

the program. (2) *Faith Sharing*: To accommodate their varying schedules, we offered the opportunity for participants to share their experiences of prayer and of the program at two different times, on two different days of the week. The purpose of this series of half-hour, faith-sharing

is the first chapter of *Choosing Christ in the World* by Joseph Tetlow, S.J. The beginning of the *Take and Receive* series by Jacqueline Bergan and Marie Schwann also can be quite helpful.

While members of the faculty and administration were sprinkled throughout,

program, listing the directors, inviting selection of directors, and return by mid-February (early February); (4) to *participants* confirming selection of directors, enclosing a brief pamphlet on prayer, "Prayer Ways: A Series of Helps and Ways of Praying" (mid-February); (5) to *directors* listing directee(s) and phone number(s), inviting early contact with directees to arrange for time and place for weekly meetings (mid-February); (6) to *directors* thanking them for participation, asking if they would be willing to continue directing those who so desired. An evaluation form asked whether they had been sufficiently prepared to serve as guides and how their meetings with their directees went. It also solicited comments and suggestions for the future (after Easter); (7) to *participants* thanking them for their participation. Their evaluation of the program asked if they had achieved their goals and solicited comments regarding their directors, their experience of faith-sharing and/or liturgies, and their suggestions for the future (after Easter).

What have we learned? From a practical standpoint we learned that we should have started the process much earlier—in early December. Otherwise, the turn-around time for the first letter is too tight. Also, we ought to have had a meeting and/or a liturgy for all participants to open and close the program. Finally, when we do it

again, we'll meet with the directors as a group before and mid-way through the program.

And what of the life of the Nineteenth—Annotation Retreat at USF? Without doubt, it is alive and well—on an individual basis. For the present, we find the eighteenth annotation more helpful in meeting the desires, needs, and availability of the University community at large. Together with our other programs, both approaches to the Spiritual Exercises help us to put into practice our *Statement of Mission* which, in part, calls us to "integrate faith with life."

—James E. Flynn, S.J.
Assistant to the President
for University Mission

groups was to allow participants to reflect together, share the experience of their daily commitment to prayer, and discover the mutual inspiration and support that can be found in communal prayer. After an opening or centering prayer, people briefly introduced themselves and then listened to a reading from Scripture. Discussion followed and the meeting closed with a brief prayer.

The directors or guides were lay women and men, members of the Jesuit community, and men and women of other religious congregations. An excellent resource and framework for the program, especially for the directors,

the majority of participants came from the ranks of the University staff. They represented varying religious traditions.

Needless to say, such a program depends on the generosity and good will of a number of people. Seven letters were sent out to meet the time frame of Ash Wednesday (February 16) and Easter Sunday (April 3): (1) to *prospective directors* describing the program and asking if they were willing to serve as guides (mid-January); (2) to *directors* agreeing to serve, enclosing a copy of the letter to the University community (early February); (3) to *the University community* describing the pro-

