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In the First Person: An Introduction

Jennifer A. Glancy

Nice words.

One way to ignore a prophet is to domesticate him, to treat a prophetic call as nothing other than nice words. In his keynote address at the October, 2000 Justice Conference at the University of Santa Clara, Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, challenged faculty members of Jesuit colleges and universities:

By preference, by option, our Jesuit point of view is that of the poor. So our professors' commitment to faith and justice entails a most significant shift in viewpoint and choice of values. Adopting the point of view of those who suffer injustice, our professors seek the truth and share their search and its results with our students. A legitimate question, even if it does not sound academic, is for each professor to ask, "When researching and teaching, where and with whom is my heart?" To expect our professors to make such an explicit option and speak about it is obviously not easy; it entails risks. But I do believe that this is what Jesuit educators have publicly stated, in Church and in society, to be our defining commitment.

Does Father Kolvenbach really mean what he says, or are these just nice words?

We invited four faculty members, representing four academic disciplines, to reflect on the question Father Kolvenbach invites every professor to ask herself or himself: "When researching and teaching, where and with whom is my heart?" Susan M. Behuniak, Professor of Political Science at Le Moyne College, writes as a feminist about the potential for voices from the

margins to humanize both the courtroom and the classroom. Suzanne M. Erickson, Associate Professor of Finance at Seattle University, addresses the disciplinary and institutional obstacles -- including criteria for tenure -- likely to be confronted by a junior faculty member whose research centers on social justice issues as they relate to business. Sara Jarrett, from the Nursing School at Regis University, notes the congruence between Jesuit promotion of justice and core nursing values; at the same time, she acknowledges the stress that the current health care environment, with its emphasis on "the bottom line," imposes on these values. Rev. Francis X. Clooney, S.J., of Boston College and Oxford University, muses on the contradictions and continuing importance of teaching classic



Photo Courtesy of Wheeling Jesuit University

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texts, even when -- or especially when -- such texts are hegemonic works implicated in systems of oppression.

Each response takes Father Kolvenbach's challenge seriously. Seriously enough to question its feasibility within existing institutional, disciplinary, and social structures. Seriously enough to ask how such a shift in viewpoint and values might require one to change as a scholar, a teacher, and a person. Seriously enough to wonder whether it is even desirable for us to orient our teaching and scholarship in such a direction. We hope these responses prompt you to think and talk about your own response to Father Kolvenbach's call. We invite you to take his words seriously: to question them, to resist them, and, perhaps, to perceive them as risky, hopeful, and transformative. Not to do so is, in the end, to dismiss a hard saying as nice words. When researching and teaching, where and with whom is your heart?

Student Spotlight



Photo Courtesy of Marquette University

"Our vision [at Marquette University] is to provide a Catholic, Jesuit education that is genuinely transformational."

As Daniel M. Parlow, a native of West Bend, Wisconsin, proceeded through his four years at

Marquette, he went through many personal transformations, such as deciding to leave the ROTC program, experiencing the death of his father, and changing career aspirations from hard sciences to law. But the transformational element of his education is not just marked by these changes: it is the more subtle elements of his growth and development that are the most noteworthy. These include his development as a leader, academically, spiritually and interpersonally. Dan's transformations, like those of many other Marquette students, came through a powerful set of experiences, interpersonal connections and strong role models.

"so that our students graduate not simply better educated"

Starting college, Dan was as certain as any 18-year old that he would end up working in the field of medicine, either as a doctor or in a laboratory. Graduating with honors with majors in biochemistry and psychology, he certainly was prepared to do so -- and working as a teaching assistant for both the chemistry and biology departments didn't hurt, either!

"but better people."

As Dan says, "my overall Marquette experience has taught me not just about numbers and facts, but has given me an understanding of compassion, values, and morals."

Through work in the Office of Residence Life, serving as Chair to a Student Conduct Review Board, an internship in the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office and a service trip to Jamaica, Dan came to see that his understanding of success moved from a hierarchy, based on recognition, to a more interdependent, more ambiguous, more humanist definition -- making a difference in the lives of others. As he starts law school at Pepperdine University in August, he brings the academic foundation he received at Marquette as well as the desire to use his knowledge and skills -- to transform the world into a better place.