Welcome to Magis Mail

Dear Members of the Magis Society,

Welcome to the first installment of Magis Mail! If this is the first you have heard from us in the Dorothy Day Center for Faith and Justice, allow me to officially welcome you to the Magis Society. We have high hopes for this group and this periodic newsletter. As you will see in this issue, we hope this becomes a way to keep you connected with our work at Xavier by offering you glimpses into daily life here and by extending invitations for you to walk with us as we continue the very work that shaped you in your time on-campus. Might there even exist new ways for you to partner or collaborate or connect with our current undergraduate students? We, here in the CFJ at Xavier, are eager to explore these questions with you.

Beyond that, though, we hope these newsletters inspire and support you as you continue your journeys of faith and justice in the corner of the world that you now call home.

Overall, we want the Magis Society to become a vibrant network of graduates like yourselves who are chasing the “magis,” the “more,” in your own post-Xavier lives.

Happy reading and please reach out to us with ideas, updates, and memories any time.

Peace,
Dave Johnson

Celebrating a Special Birthday

Hey, Saints! Guess who turned 85? Fr. Al Bischoff (or, as you know him, Fr. B) just had a birthday! The CFJ celebrated on January 17th (two days before his actual birthday) with free cake and ice cream for the 200+ guests who attended the special party. To commemorate such a monumental day for such a monumental man, the reflection room in the Center for Faith and Justice was renamed the Albert J. Bischoff, S.J. Reflection Room. Amidst the festivities, Xavier Senior John Barber, Lt. Col. Shane Ousey from the XUROTC program and CFJ staff member Molly Robertshaw (pictured at right with Fr. B) spoke wonderful words of praise. Fr. B, of course, piped in occasionally with his own witty comments, but he stayed quiet long enough to be presented with the Reflection Room plaque bearing his name. Fr. B wrapped up the afternoon by taking a few moments to tell some of his wonderful and borderline inappropriate jokes.

By CFJ Student Worker
Forest Hempen

Special Points of Interest:

♦ The Dorothy Day Center for Faith and Justice is located on the 3rd floor of the Gallagher Student Center at Xavier

♦ The Magis Network continues to grow! If you know of anyone interested in applying, please have them visit the application link HERE or have them visit the Alumni Tab of our Web Site: xavier.edu/cfj

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Prayer for a New Year by Daniel Flynn ‘07

Joseph Clark. There are times the name escapes me for a moment, though it returns eventually. The haunting feeling of standing outside the Lucasville Penitentiary on May 2, 2006, however, never leaves me.

It was the second execution I had attended, so I thought I knew the drill. We stood out in the parking lot, one hundred yards from the fenced entrance to the penitentiary, praying for Joseph Clark; his family; the victim of his crime, David Manning; and Mr. Manning’s family. We were hoping for a miracle, a last-minute pardon from Governor Bob Taft. But this time, our vigil was different. Normally, someone would get a call after about twenty minutes to inform us of the time of death. However, this time we waited. 15 minutes. 30 minutes. 45 minutes. Anxiety and confusion swept over us until we finally heard the news: Clark’s veins were collapsing, so the lethal injection cocktail that would ultimately stop his heart could not enter his blood stream.

We started frantically calling Governor Taft’s office demanding that he step in and end the execution. How could this not qualify as cruel and unusual punishment? Strapping a man to a chair, rooting around in his arms for over an hour to find a suitable vein, causing unimaginable anguish and immense physical pain. At one point, Clark even asked, “Can you [his executioners] just give me something by mouth to end this?” This was torture. Joseph Clark died at 11:26AM EST and forever made an imprint on my life.

Three years prior, I had arrived at Xavier knowing I was against the death penalty. My parents and Catholic high school instilled in me this belief, but like many others beginning college, I lacked real ownership of my beliefs. Midway through my freshman year and long before I knew who Joseph Clark was, my good friend (and now wife!), Anne Feczko, invited me to a meeting for the Students for Life club. I attended and quickly became enthralled with discussions of the “consistent ethic of life,” “seamless garment,” and life issues ranging from abortion to poverty, the death penalty to nuclear war. The sacredness and connectivity of all life was never clearer. It was this belief that led me to Lucasville that day.

Clark’s execution shook me to the core; I had never experienced injustice in such an intimate way. As a person of faith, a person who professed to believe that the death penalty was an abomination of our justice system, I questioned my accountability in this atrocity. I was not called to stay silent. This would merely further my complicity with capital punishment. Rather, my voice and my actions had to speak for Joseph Clark and the other 1000+ people our country has murdered. This conviction stays with me today, though I admit it is far from easy. I don’t work professionally in the death penalty abolition movement, and it is often difficult to fit active resistance into a long list of other priorities, responsibilities, and relationships. But I am not called to be efficient; I am called to be faithful.

Momentum in the United States for the abolition of the death penalty is strong as we enter a new year. Death sentences were at an all-time low for the modern era (post 1976) in 2011. The Troy Davis case—and subsequent execution of a likely-innocent man—garnered unprecedented media attention both nationally and internationally. States like Maryland and Connecticut are expected to abolish the death penalty this year; Oregon recently put a moratorium (a temporary stop) to all executions; and common death penalty strongholds like Ohio and California seem ready to prioritize life over death. Hope is great, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

May we find the courage in 2012 to actively resist a practice that values vengeance over reconciliation. May we, as individuals and as a nation, learn to heed the words of Jesus and “forgive seventy times seven.” May the abolition of the death penalty become a reality. This is my prayer for the New Year and my prayer for us all.

Magis Members Working for Justice...

From the desk of Magis Society Member Shannon Hughes:
Find out what NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, is doing to address the wealth gap in our nation. Visit their Web Site at www.networklobby.org and check out the “Mind the Gap” Campaign.

CFJ Program Spotlight – Multi-Faith Ministry

Xavier attracts students of more than 15 faith traditions, including most Christian denominations as well as those from Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Shinto faiths. Religious pluralism is reality at Xavier. In line with the Ignatian value of cura personalis, care of the whole person, the Dorothy Day Center for Faith and Justice is committed to helping each and every student deepen their spiritual lives.

In the summer of 2010, the CFJ hired Andrea Bardelmeier to be an Assistant Director for Ecumenical & Multi-Faith Ministry. With a Masters Degree in Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary, Andrea has been hard at work in expanding the CFJ’s reach to non-Catholic students. The dividends are already apparent. The Muslim Student Association and Jewish Student Organization have both grown in membership with her outreach and guidance. Ecumenical prayer services and Bible Studies of all kinds have developed too.

“Promoting pluralism means we are able to enter into dialogue with people who are different, while standing in our own truth,” says Bardelmeier. “The notion of pluralism rests on the ability to step into the shoes of another, to have empathy, and to learn from that experience without losing one’s own identity.”

SAVE THE DATE!
03-31-2012

Save the Date! The Dorothy Day Center for Faith and Justice will be inducting members of the Class of 2012 into the Magis Society on Saturday, March 31st at 4pm. In addition to honoring these students, we’ll be serving dinner in the only style we know how: homemade! So we need your help. If you’re local to Cincinnati or find yourself in town that weekend and want to help with the event, we need current Magis Members to make dinner and dessert. Contact Greg at carpinello@xavier.edu to sign-up to volunteer.

This is a great opportunity to stay connected to the CFJ and network with other alumni with passions for faith and justice!
As you know... the Magis Society is new and possibilities are endless of what this network can be.

If you have ideas about any of the following, please email them to us:

- What would you like to see in future newsletters?
- Have an article in mind that you could write?
- What opportunities would be interesting to you through Magis?
- How can we help you continue the journeys of 
  deepening your spirituality, pursuing justice, and promoting pluralism?

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The CFJ Staff

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