

Conversations

On Jesuit Higher Education

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How Justice Begins
and
Financing the Mission

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On Jesuit Higher Education



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Cover: Detailed view of *Off the Cross*, by Kelly and Kyle Phelps, Xavier University and University of Dayton. Full sculpture shown above.

Wonder Can Open the Door to Great Things

My father-in-law was a great one for wonder.

He would regularly show up on our front porch at 11 p.m. with binoculars and a contagious enthusiasm and drag us out of bed to witness some meteor shower or alignment of stars that hadn't been seen for hundreds of years and would not happen again for many, many lifetimes.

Or, we would be walking through the campus where this Jesuit-educated classicist spent most of his teaching career and he would send one of my children to run into a roped off area to touch a tree, because he decided it hadn't been touched by a human for years and it would be good for both tree and child to connect, however briefly.

I don't know whether it is the aftermath of the pandemic, or my aging, or the death last year of my father-in-law, but I am aware that I am becoming more aware of things.

Recently, these "things" have been the way a forgotten rose bush sent up long stems from under the broad leaves of an overgrown hosta so its lavender flowers could feel the sun. Or how I can hear a mournful train whistle in the dead of the night, though the nearest tracks seem too far away to make that plausible. And I could not shut up about *The Book of Eels*, a book I probably think about more than is healthy because of how author Patrik Svensson's breathless wonder about these mysterious creatures leads to moving meditations. (Seriously, read it.)

In this issue of *Conversations*, poet and John Carroll University faculty member Philip Metres explores wonder, but not just for its own sake. He examines wonder as an entry point to get to a dis-

cussion of justice. "Wonder's not-knowing," he writes, "invites the mind and heart and spirit to lean forward, to seek understanding."

We were so inspired by his essay that we asked three other writers of different backgrounds from across the Jesuit network to respond and have included several other stories that look at justice and its frontiers. The result is a conversation about where wonder can lead us. We believe you will find much to think about.

This magazine also looks at the pressing issue of finances. Though most institutions of higher education are addressing the same crisis of falling enrollment and rising costs, Jesuit institutions must find ways to save money while also staying true to the Jesuit mission and all that means. Even if you are not making the financial decisions at your institution, it's an important read.

This is our second issue in a row illustrated mostly with original artwork contributed from across the Jesuit network. We hope you'll take the time to explore these images. If you want to learn more about the artists, visit our website at conversationsmagazine.org.

While you're on our website, check out our growing web-only content. You'll find stories, podcasts, roundtable discussions, video and more to keep you inspired, thinking and talking about Jesuit education throughout the year.

Thanks for being part of the conversation,

Ron Bernas, editor
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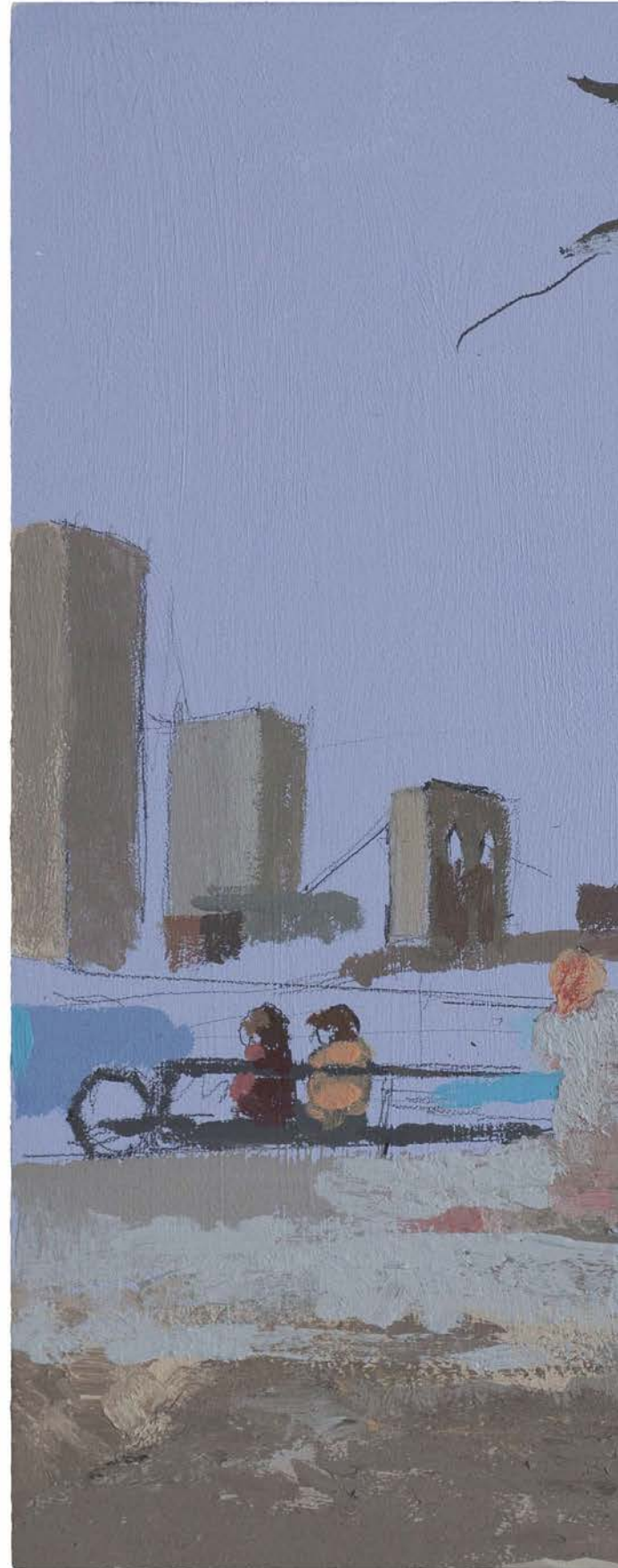
Let Us Be Attentive!

How Wondering Leads to Justice-Seeking

By Philip Metres

When my children reached the age of three, something amazing happened. The world opened up to them in all of its mystery. Everything — quite literally everything — induced a series of questions: Why? Why? Why? I marveled at them, as they plumbed the depths of the known universe. Three of four “whys” in a row and we’re at the heart of the mystery of being alive, the wonder and mystery of creation and the trouble of the world.

This blessed time in a child’s life — from the ages of two or three until about six or seven — are called the wonder years, and for good reason. A child is a poet and philosopher and theologian and the whole world is their playground, charged with the grandeur of wonder. Their relationship to words and





Suzanne Chamlin, *East*, Fairfield University. Photo by Malcolm Varon, NYC.

WONDER AND JUSTICE

world is magical. This blessed age, however, also finds them to be wild, untamed by reason, and often allergic to bedtime.

A child is a poet and philosopher and theologian and the whole world is their playground.

I awoke this morning, wondering about Jesus's encounters with children, and scrambled to re-read the passages. "When he saw [the disciples turning away parents with their children]," Mark writes, "he became indignant and said to them, 'Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.'" Jesus's embrace of children, literally and figuratively, reverses the social order, turning the lowly into the treasured ones.

But why? We cannot know for sure, but I wonder whether it's because a child has an openness of heart and mind that so many of us lose as we age.

When I was five, in 1975, I walked with my hand in my mother's hand through the tent city in Pendleton, Calif., where Vietnamese refugees, including the Nguyen family, whom my parents had sponsored through the Church, awaited resettlement. We expected to find a five-member family but greeted 13 people that day — family has a different meaning.

"Why are they living here?," I asked.

"Because they had to flee their home," my mother said.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because there was a war and they were afraid of dying," she said.

"Why?"

"Because sometimes people have conflicts and decide to kill each other instead of solving it with words."

"Why?"

Why, indeed.

That encounter never left me. I still tell that story to this day. An education in peace and justice begins with such moments of encounter — when the world's heartbreak meets our open hearts and wondering minds. Sometimes these moments are real life experiences, while other times they are encounters with art (poetry, novels, films, stories etc.), in which our imaginations are sparked, set aflame.

The questions that ensue run in two directions — into personal solidarity and into political engagement and social action.

Let's begin with the first. As Father Greg Boyle, S.J., put it, working with gang members in Los Angeles, "How can we seek...a compassion that can stand in awe at what people have to carry rather than stand in judgment at how they carry it." When we are in proximity, in relationship, in solidarity, our humanity — made comatose by atomization, alienation, and difference — reawakens.

The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas writes that "To approach the Other in conversation is to welcome his expression, in which at each instant he overflows the idea a thought would carry away from it. It is therefore to receive from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity. But this also means: to be taught." To encounter the otherness in another is, in some way, to encounter the infinite — which may be a Levinasian way of saying: God.

At the same time, something about this encounter troubles us into asking wider sociopolitical questions: Why is it that some people find themselves having to carry so much? What structures in society lead some to have to carry so much? And finally, what can I do, in the face of such injustice, violence, and oppression?

What I cherish most about my own college experience — and what I hope for my students in

theirs — is that kind of encounter, which turns us to the ultimate questions. It troubles me that college students so infrequently ask why. They ask good questions, but curiosity has left them. Have the years of education cauterized their wonder? I even put it in my syllabus: “Please ask ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions — they get to the heart of the matter.” So how can wondering, attention, and the quest of questioning be part of that journey of becoming?

I. Attention and Wonder as the Beginning

Let’s begin with attentiveness. We live in a distracted age, where our attention is harvested and commodified by codemakers and corporations. Yet the world, dear creation of which we are an undivided part, stands before us, ready for our apperception, our communion. How can we foster the discipline of attentiveness, to turn our faces from the screens — those black mirrors — and toward the world?

I recall my delight, attending a Melkite (Eastern Catholic Mass), the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, hearing the call sung out before the Scripture readings: “Wisdom! Let us be attentive!” I love its formality. “Hey,” I imagine some contemporary version going, “you want some of the good shit? Listen to this!”

The word “attentive” comes from the Latin, whose roots mean to stretch toward, and whose proximity to tender is not accidental. We lean into things when we attend to them. At its most pure, it’s sacred, as Simone Weil noted: “Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love. Absolutely unmixed attention is prayer. If we turn our mind toward the good, it is impossible that little by little the whole soul will not be attracted thereto in spite of itself.”

The good shit is really all around us, not only during Mass. In her poem, “The Summer Day,” Mary Oliver’s initial questions about creation’s author yield to attention, examining a simple grasshopper eating sugar from her palm:

who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of
up and down —
who is gazing around with her enormous and
complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly
washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through
the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.

Oliver’s poem exemplifies how attention — focused, tender, curious attention — guides us into the mystery of existence itself and the question of our life’s purpose. The poem ends:

Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

This is the gift of wonder grounded in attention. Oliver, though she was not religious, noted that “paying attention is the beginning of devotion.” Henry James once said that the writer is one upon whom nothing is lost. My mentor Robert Cording recently said that, for him, the Bible’s fundamental message for us is to wake up.

**To encounter the otherness
in another is, in some way,
to encounter the infinite.**

Apparently, there are 148 mentions of wonder in the Bible. In the New Testament, the verb *thaumazo*

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and the noun *teras* become translated into wonder, often in moments related to miracles. The greatest of them concerns what happened at the tomb. In Luke 24:12, “Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.” He could not understand. How could anyone understand?

Wonder is consciousness of the encounter with otherness as it comes into visibility. That encounter contains both recognition — we are part of the same fabric of being! — and nonrecognition — yet we are also not the same. Wonder’s not-knowing invites the mind and heart and spirit to lean forward, to seek understanding.

I think of the Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins’s odic poems like “The Windhover,” to a falcon, whose grace and power overwhelms the poet into ecstatic exclamation: “My heart in hiding / Stirred for a bird, — the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!” He continues:

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride,
plume, here

Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee
then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my
chevalier!

Hopkins’s poem reminds me that the root of astonishment is to be thunderstruck. We can feel, at such moments, the beauty, and even sublimity of the world — and our own smallness in the face of it. As Bon Iver sings, in “Holocene,” walking around the frigid miles along Lake Michigan, “And at once I knew / I was not magnificent.” It doesn’t mean that we’re pitiable nothings, but that creation itself so envelops us in its magnificence that our small egos come apart. And something else grows in that place.

What does this process of becoming through wonder look like in the university context, inside and outside the classroom, the laboratories of knowledge-production and reflection? It means creating spaces for encounter.

For me, as a college professor, I see my courses as journeys in community. Each one will be different and require different things from me. My courses in creative writing center honing our discipline of attention. I ask students to keep a “Golden Notebook” — a place where they can observe their own life and the world around them as an unfolding text. It is, perhaps, an artistic version of the Ignatian practice of Examen, that daily reflective prayer that invites each of us to see where God might have been present in our day. Just as likely, the notebook is the site of confession and frustration, of rumination and perplexity. That’s so important. So many of us use social media as a trance state to distract us from being alive.

On classroom days, if the weather is good, we go outside and sit in tight circles. Last semester, I invited students to crunch through the dry fallen leaves, and then write a description of them without using the word “crunch,” and to write about the sky without using the words “blue” or “cloud.” To invite students into their embodied selves — indeed, their whole persons — they can integrate what happens outside the classroom with what happens inside. Their icy numbness, their alienation, can thaw. I often have students say that they actually pay attention to what’s happening in their lives in a new way — that before, they were sleepwalking through college.

Their assignments, similarly, invite them to not simply write poems, and only to write about their lives, but to write their life — in the faith that if one writes truly about one’s own life, it says something about our shared life.

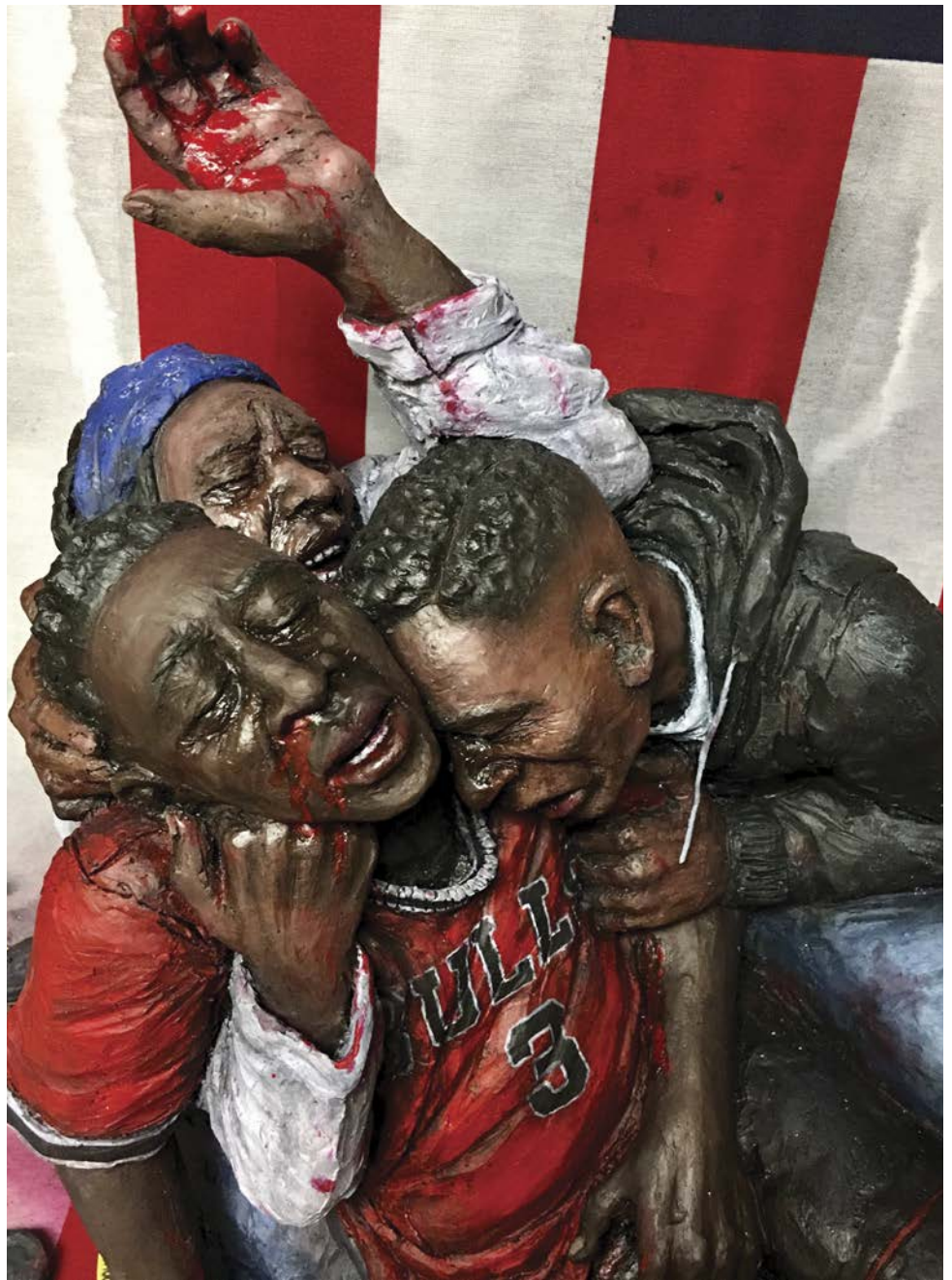
II. Wondering as Part of a Quest for Justice

This awareness, to behold the world as it is, to wonder about being itself, is a discipline. In college and for some time after, I confess, I was more interested in knowing, in epistemological questions. Or rather, perhaps, questions of being led me very quickly to questions about the nature of the world and all its apparent problems. I wasn’t thinking about Thich

Nhat Hanh's mystic observation that the page itself contains a cloud, a cloud that rained on the tree that was harvested and made into that paper which is the page. Instead, I was wondering why our country, with all its wealth, still had people living on the streets, while we were bombing another country (Iraq) into oblivion — and yet the media coverage seemed to celebrate it.

Which is to say, wonder, for me, was a beginning, not an endpoint. As a graduate of a Jesuit high school and college, I had a deeply Jesuit education. In "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice," Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., observes how the 32nd General Congregation of the Jesuits in 1975 articulated a Jesuit education as one of "the service of faith and the promotion of justice."

During the Cold War, this language of justice could have been taken as an endorsement of Marxist revolutions. In fact, a few years after this document, the Church cracked down on Jesuits like Ernesto Cardenal for their participation in the Sandinista Revolution, a Marxist overthrow of a dictator supported by the United States. But this Jesuit document was trying to craft a third way between the naked indifference of capitalism to the common good and oppressive Soviet-style communism. This third way, between what Kolvenbach calls "a disincarnate spiritualism or a secular social activism," promoted a theology that was neither en-



Kelly and Kyle Phelps, *Injustice or Just Us*, Xavier University and University of Dayton.

tirely otherworldly (i.e., an opiate of the people), nor one that was not engaged at all with divinity.

For Kolvenbach, injustice "is rooted in a spiritual problem, and its solution requires a spiritual conversion of one's heart and a cultural conversion of our global society so that humankind, with all the powerful means at its disposal, might exercise the will to change the sinful structures afflicting our world." A Jesuit education would mean not merely academic excellence and religious commitment, but also an

education into solidarity, to encounter what he called “the gritty reality” that so often is left outside the doorstep of education.

Saint Oscar Romero from El Salvador, who was murdered for his advocacy, was asked to explain Catholic Church teaching on the preferential option for the poor. His reply is on point:

I offer you this by way of example. A building is on fire and you're watching it burn, standing and wondering if everyone is safe. Then someone tells you that your mother and your sister are inside that building. Your attitude changes completely. You're frantic; your mother and sister are burning and you'd do anything to rescue them even at the cost of getting charred. That's what it means to be truly committed. If we look at poverty from the outside, as if we're looking at a fire, that's not to opt for the poor, no matter how concerned we may be. We should get inside as if our own mother and sister were burning. Indeed it's Christ who is there, hungry and suffering.

Romero's metaphor personalizes injustice, makes us imagine our own family in a burning house, and then reminds us of Christ's own suffering.

In my favorite literature courses, I tether classroom experiences with encounters — in person and via Zoom — with people whose lives have been utterly transformed by violence, from places like Palestine/Israel and Northern Ireland. In the course on the Troubles and peace in Northern Ireland, we travel to Ireland and talk with former paramilitaries and victims, peacebuilders and justice-seekers. Going outside of one's bubble — whether it's down the street to serve at a school where children are hungry, or to another country that's still picking up the pieces of a 30-year insurgency war — breaks apart the trance and awakens us to the traumatic reality of violence and injustice.

In Conversation

Three writers react to Metres' meditation on wonder:

Gregory A. Kalscheur, S.J.: Reflection is Vital, Page 9

Patrick Green: Wonder Leads to Hope, Page 11

Erin McDonald, CSJ: Keep Asking Why, Page 13

The work of universities interested in justice must build in ways to encounter those whom we might not otherwise face, the results of which spur further wondering about why some live in the “burning house,” and then how to engage in transformative action that might address that burning. This experiential education for justice happens, at John Carroll University, in nearly every sector, but particularly in places like the Center for Service Learning and Social Action; Campus Ministry; and the Peace, Justice, and Human Rights Program.

Out of encounter, out of reflection, many questions arise. What is justice, and what would it look like? Is it even possible? At what cost is justice? How is justice-seeking distinct from charity or service? How is it connected to the “preferential option for the poor”? How is it connected to the idea of working for the “common good”? Are “common good” and “the marginalized” always the same?

Seeking justice is not the province of a single party, nor is it the work of a single religion. We all begin with the same desire to understand why some do not have their daily bread, why things are as they are on earth, and why they could not be otherwise, in a kingdom where all are welcome.

Philip Metres is professor of English and director of the Peace, Justice and Human Rights Program at John Carroll University.

To Be Just, One Must See 'Justice' as a Verb

By Gregory A. Kalscheur, S.J.

In a memorable 2000 address on U.S. Jesuit higher education, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., reminded us that “the measure of our schools is who our students become.”

We want our students to become well-educated whole people of solidarity, ready to take responsibility in the world. We want them to be well-prepared for meaningful lives oriented toward service of the common good. With this in mind, I agree with Philip Metres that helping students become people who encounter the world with wonder is an essential dimension of Jesuit education. Through attentiveness, through wondering leading to reflection, fundamental questions about justice come alive.

Helping students become attentive and reflective in this way is central to Jesuit education.

Jesuit education also calls our students to move from wonder — from attention and reflection — to action. Since its earliest days, Jesuit education has aimed to help students become wise discerners, people who choose to act in service of justice and the common good. We are called to help students understand justice as a virtue to be lived, not simply a question for reflection, even as wonder and reflection are an essential foundation for well-discerned action.

Another poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., can be helpful here. Consider this passage from “As Kingfishers Catch Fire:

I say more: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —
Christ. For Christ plays in ten thousand
places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his

To the Father through the features of men's
faces.

The just one justices. Hopkins invites us to understand justice as a verb — as a way of acting, a virtue that shapes a way of living. As a virtue, justice is a matter of character; it is a dimension of rightly ordered choosing and acting — that involves an integration of head and heart, of intellect and affect. Justice as a virtue is a quality of character that disposes a person habitually not only to see the world in certain ways, but also to respond to what is seen through a way of living. The just one needs to move from wonder and reflection to action, from justice-seeking to justice-doing. The just one justices.

This dynamic is at work in Metres' thoughtful reflections on the foundational importance of attention, wonder, and reflection. I simply want to highlight the necessary movement from wonder to formation of character through action. Our attentive reflection needs to ask: Who am I becoming as a person through my responses to what Kolvenbach called the “gritty reality” of the world? Are my choices and actions helping me to become a person characterized by the virtue of justice?

In a 2010 address to Jesuit educators, Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., suggested a powerful connection between a particular way of seeing the world and the transformation of character that might lead to a life of doing justice. He explained that the depth of thought and creative imagination that should characterize Jesuit education involve “a profound engagement with the real, a refusal to let go until one goes beneath the surface” of things.

According to Nicolás, the starting point for discerning will always be what is real: “the world of the senses so vividly described in the Gospels



Sofia V. Gonzalez, *Invasive Attempt #11*, University of San Francisco.

themselves; a world of suffering and need, a broken world with many broken people in need of healing. We start there. We don't run away from there." Through the imaginative pedagogy of Ignatian contemplation, we are urged to enter into the depths of that reality. "Beyond what can be perceived most immediately, [Ignatius] leads [us] to see the hidden presence and action of God in what is seen, touched, smelt, felt. And that encounter with what is deepest changes [us.]"

When we pay attention to the world in the way that Nicolás describes, we are changed. With this depth of vision, we are able to recognize God already

at work in our world, healing, reconciling and loving. The depth of thought and creative imagination to which both Nicolás and Metres call us enable us to integrate intellectual rigor with reflection on experience and creative imagination so that we might choose to act — working alongside our laboring God in constructing a world that is more humane, more just, and more faith-filled.

The just one justices.

Gregory A. Kalscheur, S.J., is dean of Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences at Boston College.

How Curiosity, Hope, and Imagination Lead to an Engagement for Justice

By Patrick M. Green

Every time I enter the door of the Little Bean Coffee Shop — my eldest daughter’s favorite coffee shop — a sign grasps my attention: “Wander Often, Wonder Always.”

I stare at the words and ponder. I take a deep breath, accepting the gentle reminder to wonder, an invitation to be curious, imaginative, and hopeful. It reminds me of Albert Einstein’s approach: “I’m enough of an artist to draw freely on my imagination, which I think is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.”

In Philip Metres’ article reminding us to be attentive and connecting wondering to justice-seeking, I am struck by his connections to “courses as journeys in community,” his description to “tether classroom experiences with encounters,” and his emphasis on how “experiential education for justice happens” in a Jesuit context.

His emphasis on encounter requires guided reflection, creating space for students to make meaning, to wonder, to inquire; such inquiry leads to justice seeking. Such descriptions anchor Jesuit education in community-engaged learning, and Metres offers foundational reminders that our work as educators call us to craft learning spaces where students wonder, reflect, encounter, question, and act for justice.

Service-learning and other forms of community-engaged and high-impact learning are ideal spaces, not just because they connect students to an encounter with community, but because they provide pathways for students to wonder in specific

ways, namely through curiosity, imagination, and hope. In order to do community-engaged learning work well, we invite our students to be curious, to be imaginative, and to be hopeful so that we move toward justice.

These concepts are not superficial ones, nor are they simple pithy statements to generate motivation. We have long rooted our understanding of curiosity, imagination, and hope in the arts and humanities, and Jesuit education has historically elevated each of these concepts as foundational pillars to the educational value that connects the classroom and community.

For example, a core value in Jesuit education is that “all things are worthy of our attention, curiosity and study because in each one of them there is the possibility of finding God.” We see this in Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.’s emphasis on encounter as students “must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering, and engage it constructively.” And it’s in the poetic prayer invitation often attributed to Pedro Arrupe, S.J., “What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything.”

Heidegger’s framing of the ontological priority of the possible pushes us to imagine new possibilities and, as Dan Hartnett, S.J., explains: “The exercise of imagination is not about developing grand utopian schemes; it means bringing to fruition those new seeds of justice.”

I am reminded of the new Ignatian Design Thinking business course taught by Dr. Stacy Neier



Suzanne Chamlin, *Summer Porch*,
Fairfield University.
Photo by Malcolm Varon, NYC.

Beran at Loyola University Chicago, in which students' imagination is captured by working with a community partner business on an urban water park that emphasizes STEAM education. Questions of access and equity abound as students explore this curious idea. This community-based learning course immerses students in creative thinking while also asking whose voice is not considered in the urban context.

When our students engage in the community and reflect on new possibilities, they seek justice rooted in a hope that, as Pope Francis reminds us, "does not expire, because it is based on the fidelity of God. The hope of the Spirit is not even optimism. Born deeper, it rekindles at the bottom of the heart the certainty of being precious because loved."

When we create space for our students to wonder, we allow them to reflect on our shared humanity and the existential reality of God's love for each of us, despite our brokenness, behavior, or accomplishments.

The current research emerging from psychology, neuroscience, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and the cognitive science field demonstrates there is a science of curiosity, imagination, and hope as isolated conceptions. Yet, such research and discovery suggests the way to hope is through imagination, and the path to imagination is by fostering curiosity.

To wonder, by relationship, leads to hope. What is unique is that these conceptions are intertwined, interdependent, and inter-relational — curiosity, imagination, and hope are scaffolded upon each other to exist, and community-engaged learning is the fertile soil to grow these in our students.

When we design and create opportunities for our students to learn through community-based experiences, such engagement has the potential to foster curiosity, imagination, and hope as a path to seeking justice. Such engagement for justice exists in the betwixt and between of science and art, theory and practice, the classroom and community.

Those both/and spaces of learning may even allow our students to see themselves and others for the first time, and to see a world in which all are "precious because loved" by God.

Back at the coffee shop, I take a deep breath and sip my coffee. I look at my college-aged daughter drinking her iced coffee. I close my eyes, slowly taking in the moment, and I wonder.

I turn toward the door of the coffee shop, and watch as she walks out into our curious world with her wonderful imagination for justice.

Patrick Green is executive director of the Center for Engaged Learning, Teaching, and Scholarship at Loyola University Chicago.

Wonder isn't Just About Asking Questions, it's Also About Hearing Them

By Erin McDonald, CSJ

How often do I ask the question why?

How often do I assume I know the answer or tell myself a story about another person's circumstances or actions instead of asking questions? Probably more often than I would like to admit.

Perhaps as we age, we slide into complacency and a false sense of comfort at thinking we know most everything we need to know. Yet Metres' article jolted me into questioning and reflecting more deeply. If I am comfortable and complacent, how do I encounter God in all things? How then am I committed to accompanying students in a faith that does justice? When I embody an attentive and curious spirit, I experience the sacredness of the present moment and can truly encounter the world around me.

Accompanying youth toward a hope-filled future requires imagination and wonder. This has been an especially transformative year for me as I have found myself more attentive to the experiences of my students, most especially the realities and hopes of our non-binary, Muslim, and undocumented students who are living in challenging times, as well as those who were impacted by recent school shootings in Michigan.

Metres states "wonder is consciousness of the encounter with otherness as it comes into visibility. That encounter contains both recognition — we are part of the same fabric of being — and nonrecognition — yet we are also not the same. Wonder's not-knowing invites the mind and heart and spirit to lean forward, to seek understanding." A sense of wonder is necessary to imagine a different world, to see new possibilities and to encounter the sacredness of life.

Walking with young adults has roused me from the comfort of thinking I know the answers and drawn me into a greater awareness of the importance of dialogue, especially across diverse perspectives and experiences. Pope Francis has invited Catholics around the globe to be a synodal Church that encounters the world from a framework of mutuality, listening and communal discernment. This has inspired me to spend more time just sitting with students, listening to their concerns and hopes with an open heart and open mind. This has taught me that I need to be a better listener, not only with my students but in my journey with God.

Embracing a spirit of wonder and questioning acknowledges that we do not know everything, cannot solve everything, and that it takes a spirit of solidarity to bring about the kingdom of God among us. Accompanying youth in advocating for a more loving, just and inclusive world has been a truly humbling experience. As I work to form young adults as contemplatives in action, it has formed my heart as well, as we learn and grow together.

The 2023 mass shooting at Michigan State University, was relatively close to our own campus therefore our student body was deeply impacted by the ripple effects of this violence. As a campus minister, I came into work prepared to accompany students in their grief and confusion. However, I encountered students who were grieving but also angry. Their rage was directed at me and all of us adults who failed them by failing to create a world in which students can attend class without fear of being killed.

I felt uncomfortable and overwhelmed as I



Trung Pham, S.J., *Listening*,
Seattle University.

though there is truth to the fact that as we age, we tend to lose the enormous sense of awe and wonder we have as children, but I wonder whether college students really have lost their sense of questioning? How have I contributed to a culture of distrust of adults? Overwhelmingly, young adults mistrust institutions and structures, especially those of the institutional Church and education system, that have so often failed them — failed to protect them, failed to include them, and failed to truly wonder about their perspectives.

Young adults are on fire for social justice. They are advocating for a more loving, just and inclusive country, Church and world because they know their lives depend on it. There is a deep yearning to be seen, heard and valued. As educators, we must model attentive spirits and curious hearts with our students and with

received their rage. It was powerful and humbling because I realized they were right. I had to sit with my own discomfort and embrace the reality that young adults are stepping into a violent and divided world not of their own making. I wanted say that this isn't my fault, I've done what I could. Instead, I just apologized. I listened, I asked questions, and sat with the answers. I can't fix this and I can't promise it will get better, however I can reverence their witness. Together we can strive to co-create a different world and perhaps I have to earn the trust of young people so they might gift me with their "why" questions.

Metres states his disappointment that college students so infrequently ask the question why. Al-

one another. We must also center the values and needs of young adults, especially on a national policy. As our country becomes more polarized, we are drifting farther away from the Gospel message of loving God and neighbor without distinction.

All generations carry within them a wisdom the world needs, and when older adults can hold space for the questions, ideas, hopes, and wonderment of young adults, than nothing is so marvelous for God!

Erin McDonald is a religious sister in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph and a social worker. She is University Minister for Service and Justice at University of Detroit Mercy.

Meet the Artists

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1. Trung Pham, S.J. is a Vietnamese-born, Seattle-based artist and educator. He received a BS in Chemical Engineering from UCLA, and earned an MFA in drawing and painting at the Pratt Institute in New York City. He received his MDiv and STL in Theological Aesthetics from the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif. After his Jesuit ordination in 2012, he joined the department of Art, Art History and Design at Seattle University. His works have been exhibited at the University of San Francisco, and the Catholic Center in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Bronze works include the Saint Clare statue at Santa Clara University, and the Crucifix at St. James Cathedral, Seattle.

2. Sofia V. Gonzalez is an artist and educator living and working in Sonoma County, Calif. She is inspired by her natural surroundings and uses processes of sewing, staining, and color to explore her sense of place. Gonzalez graduated from the University of San Francisco with a BA in Fine Arts. She received her MFA at California College of the Arts. Sofia currently teaches as an adjunct professor at Southwestern College, Santa Rosa Junior College and the University of San Francisco, her alma mater.

3. Kelly & Kyle Phelps. Kelly Phelps is a professor and chair of the Art Department at Xavier University. Kyle Phelps is a professor at University of Dayton. They work collaboratively to create a mix of traditional ceramic, sculpture, and mixed media art. Much of their work is about the blue collar working-class, race relations, and the everyday struggles of the common man and woman. Some of the found objects that the twins have incorporated into their work are soot-covered or soaked in cutting machine oils that emit a distinctive odor commonly found in automotive factories.

4. Suzanne Chamlin is an associate professor at Fairfield University. Her drawings are in the collections of the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C.; The Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven; and the Nelson Atkins Museum, in Kansas City, Missouri. She has had residencies at Yaddo, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the Ragdale Foundation, Funacion Valparaiso in Spain, and the Edna St. Vincent Millay Colony. Chamlin received her BA from Barnard College, and her MFA in Painting, from Yale School of Art, Yale University.

Education for Citizenship

By Kathleen Orange

In *Cultivating Humanity*, Martha Nussbaum argues that the purpose of liberal education is to free students from the self-interest of their class, race, and gender backgrounds by seriously examining the interests of others. The educated person, in short, has expanded his/her view of the good beyond what is good for me and for those like me.

It is obvious that this flies in the face of the role of U.S. higher education in reproducing privilege, of the common belief that education is about getting “more for me,” and the frequent evaluations of institutions by the income of their graduates.

The question of the educated citizen returns to the ancient roots of our endeavor, to Socrates, who tried to convince the Athenians that their moral character was at the root of their well-being, something Aristotle carried forward convincingly in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, arguing that the practice of virtue is human happiness. In his *Politics*, Aristotle tells us that the active life of a citizen gives the greatest scope for the exercise of virtue and therefore that citizenship, polis life, is crucial for the realization of a human person’s true nature.

Hannah Arendt’s *On Revolution*, following Aristotle, argues that the good life is public life, that freedom is the scope to participate in shaping the commonweal, but that such happiness will always elude those bent on living for their ma-

terial desires. When we cast the question as freedom versus responsibility for the common good, we are speaking mainly of the private sphere in which persons are protected in their liberties and in the right to build a life for themselves. But freedom is also the right to participate in the shaping of one’s world, to act on the moral political concerns that one can perceive as crucial to the common good.

Tattoos on the Heart by Fr. Greg Boyle tells us that the task of each of us is to widen our “jurisdiction,” to draw the excluded into the circle of kinship. In the near-fractured polity of the United States, the core issue is precisely for citizens to be able to see the good as more than self-interest narrowly defined and to include both the different and the despised as their kin.

In the fall of 2022, Spring Hill College began a series of freshmen courses called Pathways to encourage active reading and students’ reflection on

purpose and identity. A central motif of my class’s text, *Tattoos on the Heart*, is the experience of gang members, homeboys, who have previously been excluded from human community coming to see themselves as somebody through experiences of acceptance and inclusion. I

asked my students to consider who was in their “jurisdiction” and whether they could widen it.

When students practice the virtue of including

**Growth in
compassion is at the
root of all
commitment to justice.**

more people in their circle: our Hispanic groundskeepers and Black cafeteria workers, homeless men outside the restaurant where they work, they say, “I want to change my moral character to be inclusive of more than my family, friends, and members of my volleyball team.” Such growth in compassion is at the root of all commitment to justice and lays the groundwork for serious study of the lives and cultures of others described by Nussbaum. One student, a freshman from Chicago, said:

I have learned that nobody is out of my jurisdiction, and that everyone is worth something. When talking about compassion or kinship I began to realize how lucky I am to have those feelings towards me so greatly. The recognition of the feelings of kinship, compassion, and jurisdiction is what most of the homies have never felt. Knowing some others have never felt this feeling of love has inspired me to make sure I do something little every day that ties back to one of these words.

Talia Vari, Pathways Freshman, 2022

The development of persons with the skills and will to exercise such choices is what Jesuit education means by leadership. This education may struggle for credibility with our students who usually come from upper-middle class backgrounds and families who have succeeded in the quest for material well-being, in a country that makes heroes of billionaires who do not even nod to the common good by paying taxes. But our Jesuit universities through robust and growing community engagement and service-learning programs foster knowledge of others, analysis of the structures that shape radically different life chance for human beings, and foster personal relationships with “others.” It is remarkable how eager our students are to examine their lives in this regard. Two freshmen in our fall, 2022 Pathways classes said:

Carrick Brogan: The greatest lesson that I believe that we should take from Fr. Boyle and all of his incredible stories is that the greatest gift that we can give anyone is a chance.... I think the best way to look at this is to give others the chance to know that they are seen. Obviously, anyone with working eyes can see someone, but that is not what I mean. I mean to be seen for the person that you are... Reading this book has made me want to change the way that I look at people and see beyond the obvious and peer into the good person that someone can be.

Talia Vari: Father Boyle’s public perspective on how much the homies mean to him is life changing for all. When Boyle uses words like “kinship,” “compassion,” “God’s work,” we often associate them with the basic Catholic definitions of the words and tie them back to just God. However, not in this case, when reading about compassion, Boyle says “We are meant to be the compassion of God.” He is referring to us thinking about our actions, and completing them with the same compassion God did.

These students did not experience growth in kinship as a burden, but as a privileged redirection of their moral lives, the happiness Aristotle called virtue. The remarkable thing about Boyle’s notion of kinship is that it is something everyone practices in everyday life. The students were very aware of who was in their “jurisdiction,” and they found it a simple matter to enlarge it. They could see the connection between their daily lives and the large moral social issues Boyle describes and confronts. He has homed in on the central issues of our time in a way that allows students to find the moral key to a very confusing age.

Kathleen Orange is the founder of the Foley Community Service Center at Spring Hill College and associate professor emerita of political science.



Slavery Is (Still) The ‘Peculiar Institution’

By Karsonya Wise Whitehead

It was South Carolina senator, political theorist, and plantation owner Robert Calhoun who, in 1850, fittingly described slavery as a “peculiar institution.” He believed slavery was a positive good rather than a necessary evil and was a staunch defender of white Southern beliefs and practices. It has been 173 years, and though it is clear that slavery was indeed a peculiar institution, it was also an unnecessary evil and America is still struggling to reconcile itself with the history and legacy of slavery.

The lofty ideals and dreams of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are inextricably linked to the horrific realities of slavery, violence, torture, and pain. This is the moment to scream that Black lives in this country finally matter, even if what we see around us are constant reminders that they do not. The peculiar institution is a reminder that Black bodies have always been valued even though white Americans have acted as though Black lives did not matter. What we know to be true, and what we should be teaching students, is that Black history is American history. It is through the tears, sweat, blood, sacrifice, struggle, faith, love, laughter, music, and humanity of Black people that one can trace The American Story.

This is the moment when, as Angela Davis once said, we must “sink deep into the moment” because it will be short-lived.

In August 1619, when the first “20 and odd Negroes” arrived in Jamestown,

Virginia, they did not know what their future held, but they did know their past. They remembered freedom and family; they remembered being loved and being valued. They remembered that their lives and their survival, and their sanity mattered. They understood that they were not the embodiment of evil and violence in this story; they were heroes and sheroes of their stories. And they were not the footnote to the beginning of America’s story; they were at the center of the story. They were the dawn of a new day. They were the hope and the dreams of their parents. They were survivors, and even if their story was not going to be written, it was going to survive.

The story of the first African people to arrive in this country showed up in my great-grandmother’s eyes and my Nana’s hands. It shows up in the laughter of my sons and in their quiet moments of resistance. Their worth and their value endured.

It was during this early period that the notions of race and slavery, as explained by historian Ira Berlin, were constantly being reevaluated. America moved from being a “nation with slaves” (where slavery was one of the economic pillars of the economy) to a “slave nation” (where slavery was the center of the economy).

The nation was built by Black hands on the backs of Black people. It was built on the compromises that White men made about slavery which was essentially about the worth and value of our people.

According to economist Robert Evans, the slave market for the antebellum South was similar to the New York Stock Exchange because it “served in the eyes of the public as a sensitive reflector of current and future business prospects.” So the market itself was driven by the cost and value of Black bodies.

In 1860, an enslaved man, in good health and condition, was worth about \$1,500, and an enslaved woman or girl of childbearing age was worth about \$1,325. Now, to do the math: \$1 in 1860 is worth \$33.87 today; so an enslaved man, using today’s money market, was worth about \$50,805, and an enslaved woman, \$44,877.

Black bodies have always been valued economically in this country, and unless one studies the peculiar institution, they will struggle with understanding the current racial climate and fail in trying to figure out how to collectively move beyond it and to value Black lives beyond their simple economic value.

Black history in all of its complexity is American history and without examining this story and including this story, there is no true American story to tell.

Karsonya Wise Whitehead is the founding director of the Karson Institute for Race, Peace, and Social Justice at Loyola University Maryland. Portions of this essay are from the forthcoming book, Legacy of Action: How Dr. Geneva Gay Transformed Teaching.

In Prison, Invisibility is its Own Punishment

By Marcus Kondkar

Pope Francis calls on us to create a culture of encounter with “the other” if we want to understand their experiences, particularly for folks who are marginalized to the sidelines of society. In order to make empathetic connections with the other, to be reminded of our common humanity, we must visit with them, hear their stories, and see them as whole human beings. In the absence of such encounters, we remain trapped in our own set of assumptions and prejudices, and narrow our existing world view. He has also characterized life without parole as, “the death penalty in disguise.”

I spend a lot of time analyzing data on incarceration, sentencing patterns, and recidivism, with a focus on life-without-parole sentences. In the face of recent declining incarceration rates in the United States, and despite remarkably low recidivism rates for folks released from serving lengthy sentences, the proportion of incarcerated folks sentenced to die in prison has continued to grow and shows no sign of retreat. In the past three decades, the life-without-parole population in the United States has more than quadrupled.

As a sociologist, I am trained to think about social life through a structural lens, from a distance conducive to maintaining objectivity, but that changed about a decade ago when I

met Calvin Duncan, a remarkable man who served 28 and a half years on a life sentence before winning his freedom with help from the Innocence Project New Orleans.

Calvin spent most of that time at the Louisiana State Penitentiary — Angola — as an “inmate counsel,” and he knew all the people there serving life sentences; he grew up with them and knew their stories of transformation and growth over the years.

As Calvin and I talked, we realized that people don’t know about the change that individuals go through behind prison walls. One of the consequences of designing prisons to keep people in, is that they keep the rest of us out, and the people in them remain an abstraction to us. We are skeptical of transformation and rehabilitation because we don’t see it. So Calvin and I realized we had to find a way to get into the prison and get these stories out.

We designed an ethnographic oral history project, initially for an academic audience, and after much effort, I was given access to Angola to record more than 100 life-history interviews with people serving life without parole. While Louisiana is an extreme outlier in the use of life without parole sentences, the men at Angola are representative of the 55,000 Americans currently serving life with-

out parole across this country. The men I spoke to were all convicted of murder, which in Louisiana carries a mandatory life without parole sentence. They were disproportionately Black; all were convicted when they were very young, and all had served at least 20 years in prison.

During the first week of interviews at Angola I realized that I was encountering something more intimate and far-reaching than I had imagined. I was suddenly privy to extraordinary stories of transformation and struggle that the public would never ordinarily get a chance to see or hear.

Right away, I was struck by the openness and emotional intensity of our conversations. Several of the men I spoke to told me that I was the first person to see their tears since they were children. There were stark reminders of how their invisibility and feelings of insignificance have been normalized.

Most were confused as to why I wanted to learn about them, why anyone would be interested in them, and why what they had to say might matter to anyone. I came to learn that the men were telling me things they never shared with their loved ones, because they have learned to avoid emotionally difficult conversations to spare them worry. Something about meeting a relative stranger and being asked about



Kelly and Kyle Phelps, *Carlita*, Xavier University and University of Dayton.

their lives allowed them to share memories and talk about things they would otherwise keep hidden away.

We returned to the prison to screen the project for all the men who contributed to it, and now that the interviews are beginning to reach the outside world through The Visiting Room Proj-

ect, they're having profound and unexpected consequences. In some cases, the interviews have served as a catalyst to reunite families after decades of estrangement. In others, they have helped victims' family members learn more about the men responsible for their loved one's murders, which has led to healing

and forgiveness. And in almost all cases, they have simply allowed the men who shared their stories to feel that people in their lives can see them more fully.

Perhaps the most unexpected development of all is that some of our contributors have come home since I interviewed them. In 2021 a new district attorney was sworn into office in New Orleans with a promise to review excessive sentences and wrongful convictions. As of this writing, three of the men interviewed in the project have been exonerated; an additional eight have had their murder convictions downgraded to manslaughter and released for time served.

When we sat together just a few years earlier, we could not imagine that this might happen: the permanence of their sentences loomed over all our conversations. But we are now in the extraordinary situation where they have become full partners in the local and national community engagement events being organized around the project.

The Visiting Room Project is an invitation to experience this culture of encounter, to sit face-to-face with people serving life without the possibility of parole, and hear their stories, in their words. As Calvin told me when we first dreamed up the project: "We just want to be seen for who we are."

Of course, this is true for all human beings, but how much more for the thousands we've locked away to die in our prisons, never to be seen or heard from again?

Marcus Kondkar is associate professor of sociology at Loyola University New Orleans.

Justice Calls for Access to Mental Health

By Eric C. Chen

Access to mental health care is a social justice issue, especially because it is often limited in underserved communities and inaccessible to those living in surrounding areas.

If it wasn't evident enough before, one thing certainly is clear on this side of the pandemic: In the United States, the mental health care system is ill prepared to address the alarming crisis affecting mental well-being within minority groups. The instability and inconsistency in mental health services, combined with barriers to accessing affordable mental health care, exacerbate existing disparities of other kinds and perpetuate mental health inequities.

For those of us working within Jesuit higher education, we have a special responsibility for reaching our students who need mental health care but do not seek or receive it, especially minority students who note the need for support as well as the barriers related to accessing services. Faculty and staff are in the vanguard of supporting those students whose learning and education are affected by mental health struggles – struggles that are amplified by a variety of personal, interpersonal and external factors. We at Jesuit institutions are encouraged to be mindful of the Jesuit dictum of “cura personalis” (“care for the whole person”) in our interactions with students. As such, while we foster our students' intellectual, moral, and spiritual well-being, we also need to be aware of how students' mental health issues may interfere with this aim.

In an effort to promote care for the whole person, I have endeavored to open a space for personal engagement around mental health challenges by including the following statements on my course syllabi :

Student Acknowledgment: I am fully aware that you are likely taking other courses, pos-

sibly working, while assuming different family and social roles. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, we have been grappling with various challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic as well as ongoing reckoning with systemic inequalities. In this context, I hope you prioritize your needs for maintaining physical and mental health and that you will stay as engaged as possible despite all these challenges on multiple fronts.

Accommodation and Support Services for Students with Disabilities: We will all need some accommodations in this class, because we all learn differently and this course thus is designed in accordance with the three principles of universal design for learning (UDL): engagement, representation, and action and expression. The practical implication of UDL is that a curriculum should include alternatives to make it accessible and appropriate for students differing in racial, social, and cultural backgrounds and experiences, language skills, and abilities in learning contexts.

Beyond individual initiative, collaborative efforts and creative strategies are needed to provide access to mental health services on campus in a way that decreases stigma. Again, drawing on our core values, Jesuit institutions can leverage faculty, staff, and administrators to aid in the identification of students needing services while dismantling mental health stigmas. To accomplish this, we can begin by increasing “mental health literacy,” or the knowledge and understanding of mental disorders, in order to promote recognition, prevention, and man-

agement. Providing the appropriate mental health awareness training to faculty and staff so they can collaborate with the counseling staff is essential to reducing mental health stigma and thus to advancing care and justice within our communities.

Both on and off campus the challenge to accessing mental health care has recently been compounded by a shortage of mental health professionals, financial barriers, and geographical constraints. Within this context, we have to embrace the importance of addressing social justice issues with action that is carefully calibrated to complex local needs.

One example of how such action beyond the institutional gates might look is a clinical service program I have directed since 2021, thanks to a grant from the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation. Designed to increase access to health care in marginalized communities in New York City, this program offers free telehealth counseling in both English and Spanish to predominantly Black, Latinx, and immigrant youth. It also offers virtual workshops for parents and teachers to learn about specific mental health issues impacting children and students. The surging demand for the program's counseling services further validates this need to break down barriers for families who need mental health services. In addition, many school-based mental health professionals refer their students to us because they simply are overwhelmed by their students' rising mental health concerns.

By building trust in local school communities, this program has become a resource for school staff uncertain about where to direct high-need students. In addition, we have used workshops to educate staff on best practices to acquire higher-level care for their students. To expand this work, I am currently implementing a five-year project with funding support from the U.S. Department of Education that aims to enhance schools' capacity to provide mental health services to students, while increasing students' access to counseling services.

Circling back to what we can do within our campus communities, I believe a simple yet well constructed message from university leaders constitutes an important step toward increasing mental health

literacy within the campus community and in mitigating stigma surrounding mental health. In the spring of 2023, for instance, I was inspired by an email from Fordham's president, Tania Tetlow, with the subject line: "A Message on Mental Health." It read, in part:

You each carry specific burdens, including for many of you, daily moments of being disrespected and underestimated because of who you are. Many of you balance stressful jobs to pay for school. You have collectively survived so much, from extreme experiences such as combat service or the death of a parent, to the daily difficulties of navigating friendships and relationships. How do you find the courage to move forward into a broken world and find the strength to make a difference? How should you take care of yourself? For starters, I hope you'll reach out for help – without apology or embarrassment, knowing that it makes others feel good to be able to help. Reach out to friends and family, to faculty and staff, and especially for counseling. ... Here is a gift from the Jesuits that has helped me a lot. With the Examen, Jesuits ask themselves every night – what did I do today to be the kind of person I want to be? What made me feel good in my gut? They also ask the opposite – where did I not live up to my principles? What made me cringe? And then finally, how might I love myself and others a little better tomorrow? Just tomorrow.

In the shared work of taking action to address the social justice issues which underlie our current mental health crisis, we are all in a position of power and privilege to take steps, individually and collectively, to promote such a simple yet powerful message inspired by the Jesuit tradition, both within our institutions and beyond them.

Eric C. Chen is professor of counseling psychology and coordinator of the Mental Health Counseling Program in the Graduate School of Education at Fordham University.

In Conversation

Mission vs. Money

Is it Really an Either Or?

By Matthew Carnes, S.J., Dorothy A. Hauver,
Natasha Holiday and Alan Miciak

What roles should mission and market play in making financial decisions at a Jesuit institution? What do campus communities need to know about topics like tuition rates and endowments? How should college and university leaders approach conversations about institutional agility in a period of financial instability for higher education?

In June 2023, a group of leaders in Jesuit higher education explored these questions together.

Matthew Carnes, S.J., is associate professor in the Department of Government and the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University and a trustee of Santa Clara University and Creighton University. Dorothy A. Hauver is senior vice president for administration and finance at the College of the Holy Cross. Natasha Holiday is a managing director at RBC Capital Markets and is a trustee and alumna of Xavier University. Alan Miciak is president of John Carroll University.

Matthew Carnes, S.J.: I find that many people think about finances only when a tuition increase or a salary change is announced. But you each think about finances daily, so I want to start by surfacing your principles and processes and how you balance what I'll call "mission analysis" and "market analysis" in financing your institutions.

Jesuits like to talk about discernment — trying to choose the best for the current moment, choosing from a number of good things hopefully, not between good and bad. And in your discernment process, I wonder if you have any particular principles you employ.

Alan Miciak: I start with this: Never compromise on values and mission. And when I talk about values and mission, the two most important things are first, serving students, and second, serving the long-term health and prosperity of the institution.

I think if everyone is aligned on keeping students first, we serve the mission by generating a

personal, formative, academic experience so they might go out into the world. Of course, there is no end to the immediate need in the world and in the needs of communities around our institutions. But our mission really is focused, first and foremost, on the students and their development.

Dorothy A. Hauver: Balancing mission and the market is difficult because we operate within financial realities we can't change. Holy Cross has been educating people for 180 years, and we'd like to continue for 180 more. To do this, a key part of our financial balancing act is to make serving the long-term health and prosperity of the institution a core principle. Getting down to the practical reality, we have to understand and analyze market risks and trends. At our best, we're using market analysis to support our mission-driven institutions into the future.

One important thing I think about when making financial decisions is supporting and retaining a best-in-class workforce. We

need the top of the line in faculty, student affairs, IT, facilities, athletics, and beyond. In this vein, we've responded to changing market needs and desires by creating new wellness benefits around mental health and family support, professional development and mentoring — thinking about the totality of compensation. And we've been getting really strong feedback and support for these things.

Natasha Holiday: As a trustee and finance committee member for the past 13 years, I think the place to start is to recognize that good financial stewardship is a core tenet of good governance, and stewardship is what enables institutions to fulfill their mission.

I really do believe that the institutional values should be centered in financial decisions and other decisions, too. I also believe that what you invest in reflects what you care about — in particular, when you've got a more strained fiscal situation which a lot of universities, Jesuit and non-Jesuit, are facing today.

But I want to highlight the importance of Ignatian values in trustees' work. We've been able to help support and center Xavier's board around Ignatian values, for example, by anchoring every committee meeting with shared prayer to start right. We also have a reflection period about our work and our commitment to mission, and more recently we

added reflection on our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in our decision making.

So we're asking together: Given our limited financial resources, how do our decisions impact various constituencies that are part of the University's fabric? How do our financial decisions impact the most vulnerable people in our communities? What are the investments that cannot wait? What are the things we need to change?

Carnes: I appreciate that what you focus on first at your committee meetings — prayer and core values — as preparation for your work. And it sounds like that could be considered a "best practice" — foregrounding mission in everyone's minds as they make financial decisions.

Natasha, do you think your board work at this Jesuit institution is different from other boards you've served on?

Holiday: Yes, these practices anchor our ability to serve and make good decisions in a way that's very different from other boards I've served on. Every board — whether it's a corporate, nonprofit, or university board — is there to support an institutional mission. But the difference with a Jesuit approach comes in using the specific tools that allow us to come together and focus on the best outcome for our specific Jesuit mission.

Miciak: Speaking of practices that center mission, I would just highlight that trustees and administrators need practices that align them not only on what we do and why we do it, but also on how we are going to go about doing it. I think that's a critical piece when it comes to stewardship and good governance.

During my time, I've experienced good alignment with trustees around balancing mission analysis and market analysis. But I know that other leaders haven't always experienced that alignment. It has to be there, though. Otherwise there can be some disruptive forces in play that are detrimental both to mission and to our competitiveness in the marketplace.

Carnes: In my experience as a trustee, I've come to recognize that appropriate onboarding and formation is necessary — and that's true at every level, whether it's new administrators, new students, new faculty. We want to make sure that people can come into the community, learn the community's values, and contribute to advancing those values because they feel like they own those values.

So, turning to the present moment, institutions face some great opportunities, but also some economic tensions, or potentially even economic crises. What do you see as key financial challenges and variables at work today?

Hauver: For many of us, the challenges of access, affordability, and setting tuition rates are constant. And that's because, at Jesuit institutions, we take accessibility and affordability seriously as part of our mission. At Holy Cross, as at many of our institutions, we are tuition-dependent. As costs rise, tuition rates need to rise. Still, for financial aid purposes, we meet 100 percent of students' demonstrated need. We're faced with the challenge of how to balance the budget while ensuring that students and families are able to pay tuition.

Holiday: The first thing we have to do is acknowledge the overarching economic climate and remember that many institutions may not survive in the current climate. So, we have to figure out a business model that works to allow educational institutions to operate for the next 100 years. As we do this, some of the biggest challenges include the pressures of maintaining or expanding enrollment, combined with the pressure to lower tuition.

And there's the fact that we're not just competing against other private institutions, but also against public ones that are seeing significant enrollment gains because families and students are making a choice about affordability and the "value proposition" that higher education institutions are offering.

A big part of this conversa-

tion is about that value proposition. We need to be really clear not just about communicating our mission, but also communicating that value proposition. We are creating people of high integrity, thoughtful and discerning people. But we've got to ensure that these people have pipelines for employability and that we're strengthening our alumni networks to help with that. Doing these things allows our value proposition to address what people are looking for today.

Miciak: I'd also add another challenge we all face: In this market, you have to be premium at everything you do — academics, residence life, athletics, campus facilities. And so you have to find ways to finance it all.

But beyond that, it's difficult for organizations that have been around for 100 years and more to come to grips with the challenges they face. So, it's important that we inform our campus communities about our financial challenges and that everyone understands that the future does not look like the past. When we really consider the financial realities — the challenges of access and affordability, of pricing competition, of competition around our value proposition, of the fact that we're in a shrinking demographic market — that different future becomes clear.

And I agree, both internally and externally, we have to com-

municate that value proposition. I don't think everyone sees how much it matters in this environment to communicate this. Of course, part of this work is sharing the good news that Jesuit education demonstrates tremendous outcomes. One thing we know is that people make the difference, and an engaged campus community, as our campuses tend to be, will outperform a disengaged campus every time.

Carnes: I want to ask about some of the variables you have at least some control over, the levers you can push or pull in financing your institutions. For example, I think of tuition rates, salaries and benefits, spending on capital investments, endowment spending, and engaging philanthropy to finance parts of our institutional work.

What would you want people to understand about those kinds of variables and how much you can engage them in financing your institutions?

Hauver: To begin, there's not a complete understanding of how much of a lever the endowment actually is. As someone at an institution that has a billion-dollar endowment, I can say we're incredibly fortunate. But the reality of that endowment is that it is there in perpetuity to ensure intergenerational equity. Generations before us have spent at a reasonable rate to help sustain later generations, and we need to

do that, too. We need an appropriate spending rate to meet current needs in a way that leaves a sustainable endowment for future needs. And so even though that's the lever everybody tends to go to — "let's just spend more of the endowment" — the reality is that it's meant to be available in perpetuity.

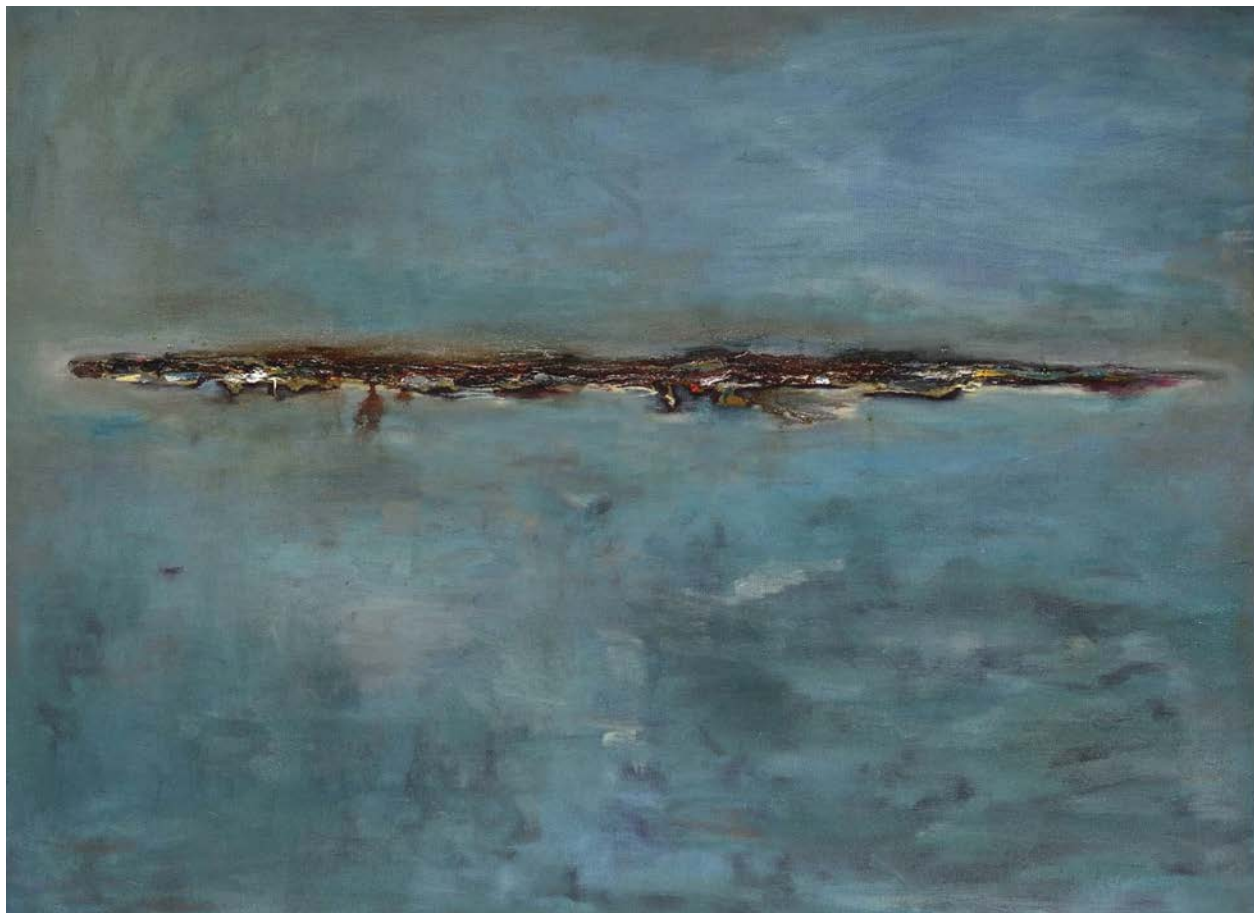
Another thing many don't understand that well is how institutions manage the "discount rate" — the extent to which they discount tuition from the adver-

tised price. We've had to put a cap on our discount rate, and though we had been "need-blind," meaning we did not take financial status into account in admissions, we couldn't continue that in a sustainable way. We hold firmly to the Jesuit belief that education should be accessible to all who want to pursue a life of passion and service to others. Providing financial aid to students is part of our mission. And so we pursue partnerships with foundations and specific fundraising to allow

us to support as many needy students as possible.

But in the meantime, people don't always understand how strategic we have to be about the discount rate, and they sometimes see it as another lever that we can move more easily than we can in reality.

Holiday: I also think it's important to understand the difference between restricted and unrestricted assets. At most institutions, endowment funds are



Trung Pham, S.J., *Crack 11*, Seattle University.

restricted in some way, and so we can't just spend more without going back to each of the donors who, sometimes long ago, made agreements with the institution about how their money will be spent over time.

Having said that, there is a need for institutions to increase unrestricted funds in their endowments, particularly in a rapidly changing economic environment where you need more institutional flexibility and adaptability. So, I think our institutions need to explain to the donor base that we're in a partnership and invite them into agreements that leave open the ability to come back and have a conversation about change in utilization of their funds.

Another point I want to make is that allocating money for tuition discounting is a social justice issue. Still, we have to balance that with the need to remain competitive institutions with the highest achievers and performers. And so the challenge is how to balance the mission-based desire to address societal inequities by supporting students that can't pay while also having enough top performers at the institution.

Studies show that students who grow up in two-parent households where parents have college degrees typically live in

wealthier communities with better schools and perform better on standardized tests. So, when we allocate dollars, we need to take the opportunity to help correct for societal disadvantage, and we also need to remain competitive institutions that attract the highest achievers and performers.

Miciak: I think we're also trying to recognize that what our institutions looked like historically will

When it comes to socioeconomic diversity, it's all in the execution.

often be different from what they need to look like in the future. And when it comes to socioeconomic diversity, it's all in the execution. You set goals, act on them, and then measure effectiveness. You're trying to shape a class, and you have the ability to set parameters for how much financial aid you give, both merit and need-based. But you allocate knowing that you want to shape that class. So, the questions are: What are the goals? And where do we allocate the money to support those goals?

And all of this can be tricky because we are a nonprofit and not a charity. We have to work within that reality, even as we all

want to make the gift of a Jesuit education available to people with greater financial need.

Another point: I try to encourage people at our institution to think that they're spending their own money, not the institution's money. If they really want to know how to make a smart decision, I think this is a good place to start, and this is ultimately a cultural thing — how to build a culture of making smart decisions knowing that we have limited financial resources.

Finally, in a world where financing higher education is not getting easier, I want to highlight the importance of

partnerships. In order to work our way through this, we're going to have to be more efficient, to concentrate efforts, and to look for partners that align with our mission. At the same time, we have to realize that there's no magic formula, no one solution.

Carnes: So, we've learned in this conversation that there's not a single solution to complex problems and that even a billion dollars, or multiple billions, doesn't fix everything. But I think we've also learned that when you put students and the institutional workforce first, that means you're thinking both about the commu-

nity right now and the community of the future. And you want to make credible promises to each group — now and in the future — that can allow them to flourish.

And so you don't want to be irresponsible and make offers of financial aid that you ultimately can't provide. Nor do you want to deprive a future generation of an education that you might be able to provide to a group now.

What I'm hearing is that, for the flourishing of the community, you may have to say, "I'm sorry I can't do that, because it would jeopardize someone else." Or, "I could make a promise that I'll give you this financial aid, but it might turn out in year three I can't fulfill that." It seems that here's where the rubber hits the road in terms of communicating about institutional finances.

A final question: We all hear about new models for higher education — partnerships, for example, or even mergers. As you think about new models being proposed, where do you see them fitting into our Jesuit educational landscape?

Holiday: I think in considering partnerships we've got to be very focused on "motivational alignment." What are our motivations, and what are our partner's motivations? Do we or they want to partner because of dire financial straits? Is partnership a way out of a bad situation? Is it a revenue-driven partnership from one partner's perspective? What blind

spots might we each have?

I think the key is in finding true motivational alignment. We spend a lot of time focused on "mission alignment" in thinking about partnerships, but we need to be focused on motivational alignment if we're going to get better outcomes.

Miciak: I love this idea of motivational alignment and thinking about how these motivations can move toward something transformative in nature, even in terms of smaller successes with partners. I think there's a lot of consolidation coming in higher education, but I think it's consolidation driven by financial difficulties rather than motivational alignment. It's good to remember the old adage that two wrongs don't make a right: in the same way, two weaknesses do not make a strength.

Holiday: It's important to remember, too, that the projection is rarely as good as the reality, despite all the institutional energy invested in the partnership. Every Jesuit institution should be focusing on what in the partnership makes us special.

Hauver: I wonder if we can find ways that Jesuit institutions can strategically partner, where we can do some shared services that make significant operational improvements and savings at the local level. Can we distinguish between the things that make us distinctive that we need to do lo-

cally and things that we all do, but that don't add to our distinctiveness? Part of what our institutions do right is emphasize how mission makes us unique and special. At the same time, this can cause us to think that we can't possibly collaborate because we're all so unique and special. But if we were able to develop some shared services, maybe at the local level we could hire another faculty member or give another scholarship.

Think about supplies and procurement, for example. Maybe we could invite Jesuit institutions to work together in this area to save money and limit inefficiency while also working with minority and diverse vendors. And this may be a good example of where a motivational alignment and mission alignment match up and might help us, where a simple emphasis on mission alignment might cause our institutions to just go back to doing our own thing.

Carnes: What I like about this conversation is that it hasn't been just highlighting all good things, but has allowed everyone to talk about financial challenges realistically, and it suggests that when we talk about financing Jesuit higher education, we need to allow room for the various tensions in the conversation. Thank you for helping to model that for us.

Mission-Centric Decision Making

Balancing Inclusive Academic Excellence and Financial Challenges

By Shane P. Martin

News about higher education's financial outlook has not been good the last few years.

Recently, Forbes assigned financial grades to U.S. colleges and universities — five Jesuit institutions were graded at a C- or below. The Hechinger Report developed their Financial Fitness Tracker looking at four key financial metrics and concluded that over 500 institutions showed warning signs in two or more indicators, a list which includes AJCU schools. The study concluded that financial troubles were present long before the coronavirus pandemic. Fitch Ratings described higher education's financial situation as deteriorating, and S&P Global Ratings called it mixed. Enrollment declines in the face of demographic shifts, losses in endowment power, and inflationary pressures have created the most challenging climate higher education has seen in many years.

How do academic leaders make financially responsible decisions that are grounded in Ignatian values? How do the needs of the current generation of college students — the most diverse in most institutions' histories — take prominence with so many competing priorities for funding? Jesuit education has always put the student at the center of the equation, but what does that look like in the current complex environment with the perplexing tension between money and mission?

I have had the privilege of serving in leadership positions at two Jesuit universities over the past 30 years. During this period, AJCU institutions of higher education have moved to professionalize and become more financially viable. At times, faculty members

have critiqued these moves, concerned that Jesuit schools are becoming too corporate and have lost their souls. As many faculty colleagues have stated, "We are a university, not a business." To be sure, we are universities first, but just as in our households, we have a business aspect we ignore at our own peril.

It might seem counterintuitive to suggest that there are principles we can learn from successful businesses and corporations, but it is helpful to be in dialogue as we can learn from each other. In *Heroic Leadership*, Chris Lowney suggests business and corporations can learn key principles from Jesuit educators as foundations for leadership. These mission-aligned principles include self-awareness, heroism, ingenuity, and love. Increasingly, for-profit businesses are concerned with the social good of communities and environmental sustainability, important Ignatian ideals. Corporations are considering themselves socially conscious and responsible, with the idea that doing work to benefit the social good can provide a sense of purpose and passion, which leads to innovation, growth, and success.

Socially-minded investors are focused on impact investing — ESG investing (environmental, social, governance) — for the common good. There is an emerging consensus that business can be both socially responsive and successful. Thus, there is an ongoing dialogue between Jesuit educational values and business leadership.

In light of this ongoing dialogue, what are some ideas for academic leaders to consider? I suggest three principles for mission-centric decision-making:

Fidelity to the Jesuit Mission is Paramount

The primary way Jesuit education will influence the world is through the actions of our alumni. We educate students who will be future leaders and agents of change for a just and humane world. Thus, the quality of the teaching/learning mission of the university, informed by faculty research and supported by dedicated staff members, is the heart of Jesuit higher education.

As Jesuit institutions, our major commitment is to inclusive academic excellence, which is how we think about our distinctive educational approach. Fidelity to this mission should animate all parts of the university, including academics, finances, and operations.

Imagine if every leader in Jesuit higher education — including the board of trustees — asked themselves, “How will this affect the student experience?” before making major decisions. Such a question brings the mission into sharp focus in the face of difficult decisions. With innumerable conflicting and competing priorities for leaders to consider, the student experience may get lost in the decision-making process. Centering student success — embracing the fullness of student diversity and unique interests — is a key foundation of Jesuit education.

Embrace the Tension Between Money and Mission

There is a challenging, yet creative, tension between academic needs and financial realities in institutions of higher education. At times, it seems like the agendas of academic and finance leaders are in opposition to each other, however both are necessary for a holistic enterprise. I encourage academic leaders to develop a strong relationship with the CFO, avoiding all-too-common mistrust and doubt. The dynamics of finger pointing or withholding critical information thwart success. Academic and financial leaders must foster regular channels of communication marked by openness, transparency, and respect. These leaders can



Trung Pham, S.J., *Gaze 2*, Seattle University.

model a productive and functional relationship that will influence their respective units.

One way to address this tension is a commitment to data-informed decisions. Jesuit leaders can embrace business practices such as market research, branding initiatives, and prospect research, but do so on their own terms. One well-known market research company was retained by several Jesuit institutions for marketing and branding studies. Their conclusion was that the “Jesuit brand” does not engage today’s generation of college bound students and should not be used. A deeper reading of their findings, however, suggests that large numbers of potential students are looking for a values-based, personalized education at institutions that support DEI and social justice initiatives, where they will have meaningful experiences and relationships — all key aspects of Jesuit education. Instead of jettisoning the term, “Jesuit education,” perhaps we need to double down on exactly what we offer and define it more clearly in our recruitment and marketing materials.



Sofia V. Gonzalez, *Invasive Attempt #1*,
University of San Francisco.

tion, yet rarely do we ask ourselves what we are going to stop doing to make room for something new. It's usually about the trade-offs we are willing to make. We can't do it all and need to make tough decisions for the sake of our mission.

Jesuit education is committed to promoting faith that does justice and fosters reconciliation. All three aspects of this commitment are important and need to exist in relationship to one another. At times the commitment gets boiled down to activating for social justice. Jesuit education is action-oriented, but action comes out of a dynamic relationship with contemplation and discernment and leads to impact for social good and reconciliation. Thus, the commitment to social justice has layers of complexity. Is it equitable to accept students with diverse pathways of academic preparation or financial footings if the institution is not prepared to address their needs? Is it socially just to offer academic programs that put the entire enterprise at risk because of their financial impact? These types of decisions inevitably require trade-offs, and grounding them in mission-centric decision-making is both a challenge and a requirement for Jesuit educational leaders.

Jesuit education faces many difficulties yet brings an almost 500-year tradition to present circumstances. Throughout this tradition we have faced and survived numerous challenges, including financial ones. The history of Jesuit higher education in the United States is of Jesuits and lay collaborators who audaciously embarked on an educational project in the face of these challenges, yet propelled by the mission.

Shane P. Martin is the provost at Seattle University. Previously he was the dean of education and the dean of graduate studies at Loyola Marymount University.

Making Mission-Centric Decision Means Trade-offs

Academic leaders receive numerous requests that inevitably involve new funding. There is always the temptation to do more, and the Jesuit notion of the *magis* might reinforce this tendency. However, the construct of the *magis* must be considered in tandem with the Ignatian notion of discernment. It does not give glory to add poorly conceived initiatives without a plan for resources nor a focus on impact for mission. There are so many good new ideas in higher educa-

Why Spend on Athletics? Because it's Part of the Jesuit Mission

By Linda LeMura

The unprecedented shift in the landscape of intercollegiate athletics over the past few years has generated serious questions about how athletic programs will be governed, funded, and experienced by athletes and fans alike on campuses across the United States.

Some of the more salient concerns include the sustainability of the tiered model for competition, a hallmark of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA, with its Divisions I, II, and III), the growing irrelevance of conference alignment based upon a shared geography, the daunting increases in both operational and capital expenses required to offer and effectively administer a wide range of sports for women and men, and challenges managing the needs and expectations for precious resources from faculty, staff, current students, alumni, and diverse institutional partners.

The driving force for these changes is the tremendous revenue growth from lucrative television contracts and ticket and merchandise sales, among other revenue streams, for the NCAA's so-called Power 5 football conferences. This revenue growth attracted intense scrutiny of the NCAA business model. Ultimately, a key question regarding the commercial environment of big-time intercollegiate athletics reached the Supreme Court: Who profits from the millions of dollars in revenue generated by Power 5 football programs?

On June 21, 2021, a unanimous Supreme Court held that in *NCAA v. Alston* that the NCAA violated antitrust law when it placed restrictions on financial

benefits for college athletes. In a concurring opinion, Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote: "Businesses like the NCAA cannot avoid the consequences of price-fixing labor by incorporating price-fixed labor into the definition of the product. Nowhere else in America can businesses get away with agreeing not to pay their workers a fair market rate on the theory that their product is defined by not paying their workers a fair market rate...The NCAA is not above the law."

By effectively ruling that athletes were allowed to profit from their names, images, and likenesses (commonly referred to as NIL), the *Alston* decision was a devastating blow to the NCAA's legacy monopoly model prohibiting colleges and universities from paying student athletes. Individuals who considered athletes the victims of unchecked greed and unfair labor practices praised *Alston* as a landmark victory for athletes, because they could now procure financial benefits in an unrestricted market environment. However, it is difficult if not impossible to predict how the *Alston* decision will impact the financial considerations for college athletic programs.

Probably all NCAA institutions, regardless of whether they offer football, will have to develop complex and possibly costly methods of addressing the new athlete compensation environment. Other athletic alliances such as the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) may also encounter ripple effects of the *Alston* decision, as the expectations of college athletes continue to evolve.

At the same time, higher education is enduring

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one of the most challenging moments in its history. These challenges are multifaceted and ubiquitous. For example, the value of higher education is now frequently measured in purely economic terms; there are political charges of ideological indoctrination on college campuses; and there are widespread claims that academics suppress the free exchange of ideas. Within the context of these and other challenges, it is eminently rational to pose the question: “Is it still a good idea to maintain intercollegiate athletic programs at Jesuit institutions, particularly when such programs rarely generate income?”

We know that the intercollegiate athletic ecosystem is fragile, despite the misperception that sports generate revenue for the entire institution. In my view,

the answer is still an emphatic yes. The reason for that answer is one word: mission.

All this is particularly significant to my home institution, Le Moyne College, which recently accepted an invitation to join the NCAA D-I Northeast Conference (NEC) beginning in fall 2023. Accepting this invitation came at the end of a process that began when Le Moyne's Board of Trustees recently established an *ad hoc* Committee on Athletics Discernment, comprised of members of the college's leadership team, faculty, and trustees. The committee met regularly for five months, conferring with presidents whose institutions have transitioned from NCAA Division II to Division I athletics, our faculty senate, alumni, members of the Jesuit community, student-athletes and

their parents, and community leaders. We consulted with experts on the changing landscape of intercollegiate athletics and the financial implications of competing in other conferences. We compared the relative risk of staying in Division II (e.g., fewer regional D-II schools which necessitate longer travel times to competitor schools and higher associated costs) with that of moving to Division I (e.g., increased investment in facilities but lower travel costs to the regional D-I schools).



Photos courtesy of the Le Moyne College.



In the spirit of true Ignatian discernment, we grappled with our options, we listened to hundreds of stakeholders, and we studied the history and purposes of athletics in higher education and in Catholic, Jesuit education. We considered the imperative in the Jesuit tradition to educate the whole person — mind, body, and spirit — and the role of intercollegiate sports as one among several ways Le Moyne students are developed as whole persons.

We affirmed that at Le Moyne, we always emphasize the first word in the phrase “student-athlete” and take justifiable pride in the academic accomplishments of our student-athletes,

who are among our best retained students, with consistently high GPAs and degree completion rates. We noted that, with an internationally recognized program called The Le Moyne Way, our student-athletes are immersed in a culture saturated with such key Jesuit principles as *magis*, *cura personalis*, and social justice. Activities outside of training and team practice provide student-athletes with opportunities to support needs within the local community.

We affirmed from our collective experience that Jesuit education has a strong ethos and philosophy, and impacts culture in ways that emphasize the common good. When done well, athletics provide opportunities for personal growth and encourage community where values like respect, teamwork, discipline, and ethics can flourish and should be on full display. Additionally, the community-building aspect of athletics extends across the student body, since “[h]igh quality academics and athletic competition at the highest level provides a context for young people



from different socioeconomic, racial and religious backgrounds to encounter one another.” These encounters deepen understanding between students, creating opportunities for growth within and between groups.

The Jesuit educational mission has always been on the leading edge of culture, and sport is an integral and powerful part of the human experience. We explored our commitment to intercollegiate athletics with the best information available and without undue influence from any stakeholder. We deliberated with moral clarity, seeking to embrace what is best for our students and the Le Moyne College community. We see the values

in an intercollegiate athletics program that fosters personal and community leadership in the pursuit of excellence. We believe competing against schools with the strongest academic programs and athletic reputations will best serve our students and the college community, regardless of the financial reward.

At its best, Jesuit education is dynamic and adaptive, never losing its purpose to enhance individual development and strengthen communities. In confronting the challenges facing higher education, Jesuit institutions should continue to enrich the opportunities important for student growth — including academic learning, spiritual growth, service commitments, artistic and cultural experiences, and engagement in a range of health and wellness initiatives that include recreation, club sports, and, yes, intercollegiate athletics.

Linda LeMura is president of Le Moyne College.

Transformative Caregiving in the Jesuit Classroom

By Mary Dunn

As I think about the potential in Jesuit education today, my mind goes to a particular painting, produced by a man known simply as Frère Luc and dating from the 1670s, which is preserved in a convent at the Hôtel-Dieu of Quebec, a hospital founded in the 1630s.

In the painting's foreground are two figures — on the left, a genuflecting nun in full habit, head bowed, eyes raised, her hand grasping a cloth with which she washes the arm of her patient; on the right, the patient himself, supine, draped in a red garment, his face worn with fatigue and his lips parted in pain, the bloody wounds on his hands and the gash at his side betraying his identity as the crucified Christ. Between the two figures stands a small wooden table on which rests a glass of water, a sponge, and a sandstone bowl — the rudimentary tools of the healing trade.

The Hôtel-Dieu of Quebec was the first hospital north of Mexico staffed by Augustinian Hospitaller nuns dedicated to serving the “poor sick” with as “much affection of care and perseverance as if they were serving Jesus Christ himself in his own person,” as the nuns’ *Constitutions* put it. Encouraged by their *Constitutions* to see Christ “hidden mystically in the poor” and in keeping with centuries of Christian caregiving, the nuns labored at once to restore health to the bodies of

the sick and at the same time to rehabilitate their souls.

Their work was hard. It required both patience and devotion — not to mention abnegation of the will and discipline of the senses. But re-visioning the poor sick as the suffering Son of God and their suppurating sores as the wounds of Christ — as Frère Luc’s painting so vividly illustrates — made their labors meaningful as devotional acts performed in love for Christ.

The Christ-centered dimensions of these nursing nuns’ vocation, however, extended beyond recognizing the poor sick as *alteri Christi* — as “other Christs.” They were also operating *in persona Christi*, in imitation of the Christ whose earthly ministry was punctuated by periodic episodes of healing. Their *Constitutions* put it this way: “the holy practice of the functions of our vocation is...an excellent imitation of the mercies of Our Lord.” The story of the Hôtel-Dieu nuns who labored there is the story of “victims of charity,” as a 1751 history of their work describes them, quite literally sacrificing their own bodies to secure the salvation of others. Some died of contagious diseases; others of “excessive fatigues,” the history tells us.

Caregiving at the Hôtel-Dieu was work fueled by compassion, by a sense that suffering could be shared — even transferred — between bodies, that

suffering could function not as a mechanism of social isolation but as a medium of social cohesion, binding the nursing sisters to the poor sick in mutual imitation of Christ. The mutuality that marked the relationship between the nursing sisters and the poor sick extended beyond a shared experience of suffering, moreover, to implicate both the sisters and the sick in the labor of saving and being saved.

The puzzle of this model caregiving work, as I see it, is that it puts back together what normative models of modern healthcare have forced apart: health and salvation, body and soul, caregiver and cared-for, practitioner and patient.

It’s not that within the four walls of the Hôtel-Dieu the distinctions between these terms were erased altogether, but rather that they were smudged. The Hospitaller nuns of the Hôtel-Dieu and their sundry charges — Indigenous Algonquins, French Protestants, Catholic settlers — were tangled together in dense webs of reciprocal dependencies. Caregiving at the Hôtel-Dieu was as much about healing the bodies and saving the souls of the poor sick as it was about securing the salvation of the nursing sisters themselves who sought, by their labors, to win for themselves the promise of eternal life.

So, what does any of this have to do with Jesuit higher education?



Frère Luc, *Hospitaller Sister Nursing Our Lord*.
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permission from Le
Monastère des Augustines.

It has been my experience, forged over the course of 14 years teaching at Saint Louis University, that the dynamic of caregiving at the Hôtel-Dieu illuminates something crucial about the distinctive character of what happens — or can happen — in the classroom at a Jesuit university. Although it's often overlooked in the literature, Jesuit higher education has the potential to transform not just students, shaping them body and soul (as my own institution puts it) into "men and women for others." It also has the potential to transform teachers, too.

I did not come to the classroom 14 years ago, fresh out of graduate school and with a firm sense of my expertise and authority, with the expectation that teaching would change me. But it has. And how could it not? What living, breathing, ensouled human could resist the pressure that texts like Augustine's *Confessions* and Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain* exert upon the self? Who could pick up and read Cole Arthur Riley's *This Here Flesh* or Simon Weinsenthal's *Sunflower* without

recognizing that those words are meant for her?

One of the great privileges of my tenure at SLU has been the opportunity to engage books like these in the context of a required introductory course in theology. This course promises to address the questions "that matter most to the arc of human life" — questions about good and evil, sin and salvation, faith and forgiveness, questions that are just as urgent to me as I hope they are to my students.

I have no answers to questions like these. The best I can do is model what it looks like to wrestle with them in dialogue with great works, both classic and contemporary, and in genuine conversation with my students.

Over the years, my sense of the distinctions in the classroom has softened. I am not ready to disavow the differences between student and professor (no more than the Hospitaller nuns of the Hôtel-Dieu were willing to dispense altogether with the distinctions between the sisters and sick). It has,

however, become increasingly clear to me that the transformation anticipated by Jesuit pedagogy implicates students and professors alike, collapsing the distance between teaching and learning in ways that would have made intuitive sense to the nursing sisters of the Hôtel-Dieu.

Jesuit higher education doesn't just make room for the kind of mutual transformation I'm describing. It invites it, putting the care of the whole person at the core of undergraduate formation. In the Jesuit classroom, under the best of circumstances, we — professors and students — unmake and remake our lives together.

It's not brain surgery, but it can save lives. Even our own.

Mary Dunn is associate professor of theological studies and director of the Center for Research on Global Catholicism at Saint Louis University. Her most recent book is Where Paralytics Walk and the Blind See: Stories of Sickness and Disability at the Juncture of Worlds (Princeton University Press, 2022).



Suzanne Champlin, *DePew Road*, Fairfield University

Photograph by Malcolm Varon, NYC

Georgetown University

Washington, DC, 1789

Saint Louis University

Saint Louis, 1818

Spring Hill College

Mobile, 1830

Xavier University

Cincinnati, 1831

Fordham University

New York, 1841

College of the Holy Cross

Worcester, 1843

Saint Joseph's University

Philadelphia, 1851

Santa Clara University

Santa Clara, 1851

Loyola University Maryland

Baltimore, 1852

University of San Francisco

San Francisco, 1855

Boston College

Boston, 1863

Canisius College

Buffalo, 1870

Loyola University Chicago

Chicago, 1870

Saint Peter's University

Jersey City, 1872

University of Detroit Mercy

Detroit, 1877

Regis University

Denver, 1877

Creighton University

Omaha, 1878

Marquette University

Milwaukee, 1881

John Carroll University

Cleveland, 1886

Gonzaga University

Spokane, 1887

St. John's College

Belize, 1887

University of Scranton

Scranton, 1888

Seattle University

Seattle, 1891

Rockhurst University

Kansas City, 1910

Loyola Marymount University

Los Angeles, 1911

Loyola University New Orleans

New Orleans, 1912



Fairfield University

Fairfield, 1942

Le Moyne College

Syracuse, 1946

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