

Students Exploring Vocation

This past semester, Justin Wrzesinski and I had the wonderful opportunity to attend an all-men's vocational discernment conference. The conference was held in Atlanta, Georgia, on the Georgia Tech Campus. Initially, the details were vague as to what exactly the conference entailed, but personally, that proved to be one of the best surprises of the experience. In not knowing the specifics, I was not able to make any judgments prior to the conference. I was able to go in with an open mind and an open heart.

Talking with the other participants at the conference was nothing short of amazing. Seeing the interconnect- edness of the participants that had been brought in from all over the country was a lot of fun. Knowing this person in common or having been at this place was another reason that we all could be open with one another.

The actual retreat part of the conference was wonderful. The variety of ways of praying was very meaning- ful. There was also a lot of time for dialogue. Being an ecumenical group, the conversation encompassed an assortment of different faith traditions. Surprisingly, the commonalities between all of us were what domi- nated the conversation. It was not about one person out to prove that he was right in his beliefs, but rather, how can we use all of our traditions to learn and grow from one another, and to ultimately better the world.

One notable point about the conference was the discussion about vocation. Seeing what we here at St. Nor- bert College mean by vocation versus how a lot of other people, places and faith traditions reflect the idea of vocation was very interesting. Often times this was a topic where some debate started, but in the end, the re- sult was a lot of growth and learning.

The weekend overall was great with a lot of new friends and insight in the end, and I am truly thankful for the total experience. I left with a lot more insight about myself and my own vocation but also with the knowl- edge that we are not in this alone. Our lifelong vocation may not necessarily be clear to us right now, and that is fine. Rather than planning every detail for the rest of our lives, sometimes we need to still remember that we are college students, we are Christians, we are friends, we are family, and that is what God is calling us to be at this point.

Justin Krueger '09

Editor's note: Justin Krueger is a St. Norbert College senior majoring in Piano Performance and Religious Studies. Justin has served as an FLV Ministry Intern for three years. The conference he attended in Atlanta was convened by the Fund for Theological Education. Only ten schools in the United States were invited to send participants to this confer- ence.

Why Serve?

I attended the Midwest Service Leaders Conference prepared to offer a presentation about how the ALIVE Team organizes and leads reflections for one-time service opportunities and thought of it as a time to learn things that I could bring back to the ALIVE Team. Little did I realize how much the conference would evoke reflections and questions for me to consider.

I was challenged to think about the very existence of service opportunities and the meaning behind doing service. During a panel session with community members who work for non-profit organizations, someone in the audience asked for advice about going into the non-profit field. One of the people on the panel promptly responded, "Don't do it!" She went on to explain that working in a non-profit organization doesn't give you power to change social injustices. She'd rather see people go on to become doctors, politicians, etc. so that they can obtain positions of power in which they can affect real change via policies.

I think this speaker made a valid point that it is not enough to simply serve others. Direct service addresses important immediate needs such as food and shelter, but to truly fight injustices, we must make strides in community organizing, education, and advocacy. We need to look at the broader societal issues that are at the root of social inequalities in order to change them.

However, let us not take direct service experiences too lightly. It is through direct service that I have had eye-opening encounters with people and heard moving stories from people facing injustices. Without such experiences, I could not feel the same compassion toward those who are treated unjustly or have the same motivation to fight against social injustices. How can our future doctors, politicians, and those in power use that power justly unless they understand and care about injustices...unless they have direct service experiences?

This leads me to another question about how we approach service at SNC. We do an excellent job of integrating service into our extra-curricular activities and some of our residential living options, but how might we make service more universal so that all SNC students might be able to have experiences that move them to actively fight social injustices? Many of the other colleges attending the conference have service learning programs that make service experiences a component of many of their academic courses. I know that Dr. Deirdre Egan and perhaps several other SNC professors do have service components in some of their classes, but why is this not more universal in our curriculum? For some, learning through participation in service is more engaging and motivating than the traditional methods of learning via lectures, textbooks, and writing papers, and it would certainly enhance and complement the traditional methods. Also, what better way could we as the SNC community embrace *communio*, which according to our new Mission Statement, "encourages us to respond individually and collectively to the needs of our local and global communities" than through instituting a service learning program at St. Norbert College?

Caitlin Froemming '09

Editor's note: Caitlin Froemming is a St. Norbert College Senior majoring in Education and currently student teaching in Mexico. The Program of Faith, Learning, and Vocation celebrates the College's commitment to service and service-learning as seen in the development of the new Center for Community Service and Learning (snc.edu/ccsl). Faculty interested in information on service-learning pedagogy, sample syllabi, and many more resources are encouraged to visit the Center's website at snc.edu/ccsl/forfaculty or contact the Center at ccsl@snc.edu.



My Vocation Journey—So Far

Way back in May 2005, I attended the Vocation Retreat Seminar I. At that time, I was not familiar with the concept of vocation at the in-depth level that was discussed. To be honest with you, I was probably not prepared for the conversations and reflections that occurred at this retreat. However, the experience of the retreat stuck with me and I have since been having this ongoing, internal conversation about what may be my true vocation. As I am typing this, I guiltily recall that one of the requests of the participants was to bring the experience to an audience. Hopefully, Julie will forgive me for not doing this sooner and accept this article as fulfillment of that requirement!

Since 1999, I have changed administrative positions at the College from the Killeen Chair, to the Master of Theological Studies, to my current position as Administrative Secretary for both Campus Ministry and the Program of Faith, Learning, and Vocation (FLV). I have truly enjoyed all of my positions at the College, and feel I have found my niche here in Campus Ministry and FLV. And as this position is full time, I now have the opportunity to finish my undergraduate degree and plan on taking my first class in the fall of 2009 as a Religious Studies major. These position changes during my time here are truly a part of my vocational journey

As an employee in the Mission and Heritage Division, I have been part of many conversations regarding the mission of the college, its awesome heritage, and how we can share this with others both inside and outside of the College. Two events have brought some questions to mind in these areas. One is the results of the Climate Survey and the other is the Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV) conference FLV hosted this past October.

The College motto is “To Teach By Word and Example.” As Fr. Jay Fostner states in the September 25 Institutional Effectiveness article, “we need to open ourselves to gaining a deeper understanding of our mission.” And “we need continual discussion about our traditions to deepen our understanding and explore how to bring them to life.” How can we teach what we haven’t learned yet? The new DVD is a good start and anyone that has not seen it should see it and even see it

more than once. Do we all truly know the colorful story of Norbert? The Center for Norbertine Studies has offered evening presentations this past fall (“Faith, Reason and Science: the Norbertine Heritage” and “Abbot Bernard H. Pennings (1861-1955) - Revealing the Man Behind the Image”). I wonder if we could host similar discussions with Norbertines, Dr. Bill Hyland, and any other Norbertine experts during the Sacred Hour in the off season (i.e Winter break and Summer) or host some noontime discussions or presentations? Such opportunities and events could lead us on an institutional journey that might help us to increase our knowledge of who we are or should be and hence improve the results of the next Climate Survey.

The topic of the PTEV conference was institutional vocation. You may know, or come to know, your own personal vocation, but what about the vocation of St. Norbert College? One session of the conference that has since stayed with me talked a bit about imagery. This made me think—When a student, visitor, or new employee arrives on this campus, do they immediately know that this is a Catholic, Norbertine institution? Maybe not. What if the statue of St. Norbert was moved to Baer Mall where it is more visible? Should we have more than one statue or image? Should some or all of our buildings be renamed to reflect our Premonstratensian history? Should we have more visible links on our web pages to our local Abbey? Do we hire staff and faculty who demonstrate an interest in our mission and heritage? Do we ask, what attracted you to apply to St. Norbert College?

I am by no means an expert in the area of vocation or the mission and history of the college. I am still in the learning and exploring process of my own vocational journey and I encourage anyone on a similar journey to keep going and those who have not yet begun to begin. I am also hopeful that all who work here will be encouraged to learn more about the mission and heritage of the College and to do what we can to improve the results of the next Climate Survey.

DeEtte Radant ‘14(?)

Vocation Conference

In October of 2008, FLV hosted a conference on campus for Catholic Schools in the Lilly Initiative: Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV). The conference focused on the topic of institutional vocation.



Conference Participants

Boston College
College of St. Benedict
Loyola University-Chicago
Marian College
Marquette University
Our Lady of the Lake University
Mount St. Mary's University
St. John's University
St. Louis University
University of Dayton



Upcoming Events

Spring Psychology Vocation Dinner

February 24, 2009

Students studying psychology listen to panelists share their stories of what brought them to their field and what keeps them there.

Spring Book Discussion

March 3, 2009

Heather King's book, *Redeemed: A Spiritual Misfit Stumbles Toward God, Marginal Sanity, and the Peace That Passes All Understanding*

Two options are available:

12 Noon at the Union in Room 201BC

or

3:30 PM at the Alumni House.

If you haven't already done so, please register at snc.edu/vocation

Retreat Seminar I will be offered this summer May 19-21, 2009

at the St. Norbert Abbey. Facilitators this year will be Julie Massey, Paul Wadell, and Rebecca Welch.

Retreat Seminars are open to both faculty and staff and explore the meaning of vocation and the integration of a vocation perspective into our professional and personal lives.

Intersections

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