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One Day at a Time
"Et in Arcadia Ego."

Arcadia - A Student Journal for Faith and Culture offers a vehicle where University Undergraduates can contribute to the ongoing "dialogue between the Catholic tradition and all areas of contemporary culture." A project of the Department of Catholic Studies, Arcadia is edited by students and faculty of Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ and is published annually at the close of the Spring semester.
Volume VI - Spring 2014

Introduction

John Hughes

I am proud to present to you the 2014 edition of Arcadia: The Department of Catholic Studies Student Journal. When Dr. Ines Murzaku, our Department Chairperson, approached me about reviving the journal, I was thrilled at the prospect of publishing so many essays that reflect how students live out the mission of Seton Hall University.

After careful consideration, we chose “Faith in Action at Seton Hall University” as our theme for this year’s edition of the journal. The entries represent the diverse student body of the Department of Catholic Studies. You will find that our contributors’ majors include Biology, Education, History, Philosophy, and Theology, among others. All students whose writing is published in this journal have one thing in common: they are Catholic. Together these entries represent the diversity of religious community on campus, giving a glimpse into the diversity, the universality of our Catholicism on campus.

Not only do our contributors’ majors vary, but the way that they are involved with their faith at Seton Hall University varies as well. Some have found that they have come to better know Our Lord through the ministry of the monks of the Community of Saint John; others have found their niche within FOCUS, the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, who have five missionaries that work in the Office of Campus Ministry. Still others have found they nurture their souls best through their involvement within Saint Paul’s Outreach, which has several missionaries living on campus and household “living faith communities” off-campus. Others have found Christ through the ministry of our forty-plus Priest Community, including, of special-note, Monsignor Richard Liddy, Director of the Center for Catholic Studies, who hosts Night Prayer in his Xavier Hall dormitory room several nights a week.

Regardless of how they have found Jesus Christ, it is clear that our authors’ lives have changed as a result of their involvement through Catholic activities on campus. These young men and women have sought to make the most of Seton Hall University’s mission in that they have truly grown in the “Mind, Heart, and Spirit.” I hope that you find these entries as powerful as the editorial staff has felt about them. The Catholic Church at Seton Hall University is very much alive through the New Evangelization. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI referred to a new springtime within our Church, and Seton Hall can certainly count its fruits as part of this rebirth of our Church.
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Please be assured that you are remembered in our prayers at Seton Hall University every day, and that your assistance to the University—spiritually, monetarily, or service-wise—is deeply appreciated. God is certainly alive on our campus. Our students continue to seek our Lord. I hope that these testimonies will prove to you their passion for the faith.
To be honest, I was bored beyond words. I tried playing on my cell phone to pass the time, as I sat there in a dirty church recreation center with several other Seton Hall students. Sitting just across from me were two monks from the Community of Saint John, with robes, rosaries and all, and they were going on about the Kingdom of God, brotherhood, and the dignity of the poor. I was not particularly excited. I only came to this thing because community service is a requirement for living in my residence hall, and I figured this would be an easy way to fulfill 25 hours. Boy, was I wrong.

First of all, it was taking up my Friday and Saturday; a big no-no for a college student. But I figured that since these monks were taking away my weekend, they would at least feed me with a decent meal. But again, I was wrong. Instead, they brought us to a grocery store in urban Orange, and gave us two dollars each, with which we had to buy all of our food, so that we could “experience what it would be like to live on two dollars a day”. And just to top it all off, we were to spend the weekend fixing up the recreation center, playing basketball with inner-city youth, and going to prayer services. It suffices to say that this was not the way I wanted to spend my weekend.

I continued playing on my phone, hoping that neither of the monks would call on me to give my opinion about something. So I twiddled away as the group discussed something about poor people, when suddenly one of them mentioned a topic that caught my attention. “You see,” one of the monks explained, “Food Stamps actually don’t buy you much. And there’s a very strict limit on how long you can keep getting them.” As a student of politics, this interested me, as I had just recently heard that the House of Representatives was planning on cutting a lot of money from the SNAP program (the official term for “Food Stamps”). The monk continued: “And as you guys experienced shopping for food at the grocery store, it’s very hard living on such little, not to mention the nutrition you must give up in order to afford basic food.” He was right.

I began listening intently, and even offered my thoughts a couple of times. Suddenly everyone was talking about the issue of poverty, offering his own opinions. And they were all genuine, heart-felt opinions. The monk asked us all “Why do you think something like this happens?” This intensified the discussion even further. One young woman answered “I don’t know, we have so much food and we’re such a rich country, I just wish we could somehow share it all. I know it’s not possible, but still.” “Well, yeah,” replied a student, “in America everything is very competitive. We all want to be better than our neighbor, and we all want to have our own stuff and make money off of it, as much money as possible.”
My head quickly looked back and forth at the different participants in the debate as more people joined in. After awhile, one of the monks jumped in, and spoke of the dignity of the poor, and how God identified with them, even taking the form of a backwater peasant in the person of Jesus Christ. “What we have here at this church is a community. So instead of all of you guys spending your two dollars for yourselves, we can all share that and use it for each other.” Suddenly, this boring weekend started to get a little more exciting.

Before I knew it, the weekend was over. I missed all of the people I met, and I regretted not enjoying the experience as much as I should have. However, it was not long after that weekend that I would have another encounter with yet more monks, this time at a screening for a film called The Rule. I was required to attend the screening by one of my education classes, as the film centers around an inner-city school in Newark run by a group of Benedictine monks. The monks were both in the film and at the screening, and showed the same wisdom and love that the monks of the Community of Saint John showed me.

I learned that the Benedictine school in Newark was extremely successful, even in the midst of city that faces a 32% poverty rate and a 22% high school graduation rate. The film showed the school as something of a student democracy, with “class leaders” being elected, and students given the autonomy and opportunity to work together, share resources, plan classes, and even bring up the grades of their classmates. Over and over again, the monks emphasized and the students chanted the school’s central motto: “What hurts my brother hurts me.” Both the monks and the students lived this message out together, with the monks of Newark Abbey refusing to move out of the dangerous part of Newark and instead remaining in solidarity with the overwhelmingly poor students. The students, too, collaborated to make sure none of their “brothers” fell behind academically, socially, or spiritually, tirelessly working to better themselves and their classmates in every way. All of which, as the monks noted, was part of living the example and thought of the great Saint Benedict.

The Q&A section at the end of the film with the monks and the filmmakers caused several different reactions, from joy that someone is finally doing something, to anger at the structures that have caused cities like Newark to be the way it is. There was also extreme sadness, as exemplified by a man in the audience who stood up, with his eyes full of tears, and his voice weak, said “If everyone lived by the motto ‘What hurts my brother hurts me’, all of these problems would be solved,” as he continued sobbing. Not something I expected to see at a film screening.

My experience with the monks from the Community of Saint John and the Order of Saint Benedict made me think a lot about poverty, inequality, and the American way, especially since I had just began studying the works of Karl Marx around that time. Coincidentally, Pope Francis had also recently come out with some comments that harshly condemned American-style Capitalism, rebuking the finance industry, wealth inequality, and poverty. As a student of Catholicism and Marxism, I noticed a very interesting overlap; an overlap that most Marxists and Catholics alike refuse to look at.
All of these wise monks, concerned students, and emotional audience members were actually critiquing Capitalism, without really knowing it. At the church and at the film screening I heard continuous condemnations of America’s “competitive nature,” the tendency for people to hoard resources and “try to make money off of them,” and American’s failings in achieving community, brotherhood, and equality. People asked how there could be so many poor in “such a rich country”, and expressed anger and sadness at all of these problems, especially the monks. But not once did I hear the word “Capitalism.” It seems these monks, laity, students, and audience members could see the trees but not the forest: they easily spotted the roots of society’s problems, but never saw the larger picture of the system that proliferates and nurtures these roots. However, Marx did.

Many might ask, to paraphrase Tertullian, “What has Moscow to do with Jerusalem?” But here I am not talking about the Soviet Union or the system it implemented, nor am I talking about the religious views of Karl Marx. I am talking about Marx’s critique of Capitalism as a purely scientific and economic critique. Marx saw the problems associated with society, like huge inequality, poverty, and hyper-competition, as symptomatic of the entire system of Capitalism, with its armed protection of private property, the blindness of the market, and rule by a small group of elites. Marx, like the Catechism and Saint Thomas Aquinas, saw certain goods like water and food as part of the “common good,” but argued that under Capitalism these common goods had become “commoditized” (made into a sellable product), hoarded by a small group of people, and then sold to the great majority for a price. Sound familiar?

While Marxism is primarily a scientific critique of an economic system, Catholicism is mainly a moral vision. Christ, the saints, the Church Fathers, and the Catechism all uphold and promote the great ethical values of charity, brotherhood, community, interdependence, and communal living. If a Catholic were to come across a homeless family, it would be unchristian and morally repugnant to refuse them shelter and food until they could cough up some money. But suddenly, if that same Catholic is the owner of a large housing development corporation, there is no problem with turning away a family that cannot afford basic necessities. The problem is the entire system is structured this way, so that the only way to have a decent life is to have money, and the only way a business owner can survive is by outcompeting his business rivals through making more profit, incentivizing both worker and owner to chase after money at all costs. Not a very Catholic system if you ask me.

What would be the problem, then, with saying that Capitalism has failed to bring about the moral vision of Catholicism? Indeed, would it be wrong to say that Capitalism has nurtured and proliferated explicitly anti-Catholic values: increasing wealth inequality, promoting competition, dividing resources, and forcing society to bow down to the love of money, something Saint Paul called “the root of all evil”? The Catechism speaks of Structures of Sin so perhaps Capitalism is the overall supporting Structure of Sin. What would be wrong with using Marx’s critique of this Structure of Sin? Catholics have been able to study Adam Smith and John
Maynard Keynes (who were non-Christians) in their economic critiques, so why not Marx? I am not suggesting all Catholics should suddenly join the Communist Party, but I am suggesting that we could perhaps learn something from Marx’s critique of Capitalism, and the ways in which it fails to live up to the Catholic moral vision.

Perhaps there is another kind of system that would better bring about the Catholic moral vision, one in which the slogan of the entire society is “what hurts my brother hurts me.” Or as many twentieth century labor unions expressed it, “An injury to one is an injury to all.” I do not remember CEOs, stock markets, and for-profit food stores in the Book of Genesis, so it cannot be argued that Capitalism is simply the “natural way of things.” No, it is a system that we as human beings created. And I suggest, and it is just a suggestion, that maybe we as human beings could create a better one, one built upon the values of the Community of Saint John and the Order of Saint Benedict, that is not all about competition, selling, and hoarding. And just as we would have no problem in using the engineering skills of a Buddhist mathematician in constructing a cathedral to honor Christ, we should have no problem in using the insights of an atheist economist in creating an economy that would likewise honor our Lord.

In the words of the His Holiness Pope Francis: “As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, no solution will be found for the world’s problems or, for that matter, to any problems. Inequality is the root of social ills.” Amen.

Matthew Miller ’14 is a Sophomore Secondary Education and History Double Major from New Jersey. He remains involved with Campus Ministry, particularly with activities sponsored by monks and nuns of the Community of Saint John, based in Orange, New Jersey.
Dr. Ines Murzaku (Left) with Father Antonio Spadaro, SJ, at his lecture at Seton Hall University, March 20, 2014. Photo ©2014, Ms. Naomi Endsley' 15
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Experiences at Seton Hall

Christian A. Zeron ‘16

As a student I have always been taught about people who became icons by following their talents and passions. I learned that Plath wrote poems, Wagner composed harmonies, Fellini birthed cinema and Freud analyzed. Naturally, I asked myself what my talent is and realized it was evident all along: talking. I have always had a talent for speaking, dictating and ultimately persuading. Not only am I good at it but more importantly, I love it. I set out to find a career that would allow me to communicate on a daily basis. I found defense law to be a career I was overwhelmingly intrigued by. I dug a little deeper into the path one must follow in becoming an attorney.

Thus far, my Catholic Studies major has expanded my mind. I have studied the juxtaposition of morality and politics, the great minds of the Fathers of the Church who formed the complex ideology of the Church and the magnitude of religions’ impact on society throughout every chapter of history. Not only has my Catholic Studies major helped me prepare for law school immensely but it has also provided another career path for me to contemplate. My classes have made me consider becoming a professor of ethics. I have found that I enjoy nothing more than discussing ethics from opposing perspectives, which I do daily as a Catholic Studies major. Slight skepticism was admittedly present when I began my Catholic Studies major, maybe a natural fear of the unknown, but I now consider it one of the best decisions I have ever made.”

Christian A Zeron is a Sophomore Catholic Studies and Business Double Major from New Jersey.
If one was to choose the singular most important credential of Seton Hall University, it would, without a doubt, be its Catholic identity. As a Catholic University, the Catholic traditions and teachings certainly influence each student’s academic journey, especially through the Core curriculum. It is this curriculum which envelops theological studies and philosophical thinking which stimulates students’ critical thinking, desire to understand, and contextualization of one’s faith and its traditions. While this meeting of the intellectual and the spiritual is vitally important to the formation of a holistic education, it is certainly not the only factor which helps to maintain the Catholic identity of Seton Hall University.

As students in this fast-paced 21st century, the intellectual can simply never be enough to sustain a position of faith in a secular world. It is no understatement to say that we live in a “culture of death.” Just as students cope with their restless spans of attention, they must also seek some form of support for their restless hearts, which Saint Augustine understands will find no rest until it rests in Thee, the giver of all things.” One’s academic and intellectual endeavors of critical thinking and reasoning only serve to prove the necessity of spiritual support. If the intellectual is approached without spiritual convention, then what is it? It is nothing short of an incomplete Catholic identity.

However, Seton Hall has not fallen short within its aim of total Catholic identity. The Campus Ministry at Seton Hall University must be credited with its acute attention to spiritual support for each individual student, and furthermore, its attention to students’ diverse needs. Campus Ministry’s offering of three daily masses, daily confession, and daily adoration are pure evidence of the invitation to both the growth of one’s faith and the practice of one’s faith which Seton Hall University provides.

I can speak personally of my experience within the Campus Ministry of Seton Hall University, specifically of Saint Paul’s Outreach. While I had already studied the rules and aspects of living in community in the writings of Saint Benedict, Saint Basil, and Saint Francis, it was an entirely different understanding of community which I gained through participation in Saint Paul’s outreach events. I not only studied the benefits of community life, but I felt these benefits come to fruition in my own life through every circumstance which I was able to utilize and appreciate the support of a prayerful and spiritually driven community. This came especially through living in a women’s household with Saint Paul’s Outreach in which daily morning prayer, evening meals, weekly events, and a communion of our faith in each of our very separate and individualized educational and career goals allowed for relationships to form far be-
yond surface level human interaction into soul deep interactions. It is this spiritual support of one’s faith offered by so many sectors, professors, religious, missionaries, and events within Campus Ministry, which allows for a study of one’s faith to grow beyond the boundaries of the intellect of the mind and break through the boundaries of the living soul.

At its core, Campus Ministry proves that the faith community at Seton Hall University is very much alive. The totality of the Catholic identity at Seton Hall University, however, is a complete circle. The reasons that Campus Ministry promotes servant leadership, the ways of community living of Saint Paul’s outreach, the opportunity to be a Eucharistic minister, lector, or altar server at mass, and the ways of life of the religious on campus all stem from theological teachings and traditions. Just as the intellect cannot survive without the spirit, the spirit cannot survive without the intellect. Each acts as a propeller for the other. The spirit is a complement to the intellect as the intellect is a confirmation to the spirit.

The curriculum at Seton Hall University is a positive development of each individual’s capacity for intellectual knowledge. Through the core curriculum and the honors program here at Seton Hall University one is able to explore the history, the teachings, and the doctrine behind the traditions practiced today, whether these traditions are prayers, creeds, mass rituals, religious lifestyles, and communities, and organizations. The emotional experiences of one’s practices of faith are supported by the concrete evidence of antiquity. The concepts of our beliefs and decrees today were developed centuries ago. Defenses of the Catholic faith are evident in Biblical texts, Saint Augustine, Saint Basil, Saint Benedict, Saint Francis, Popes’ Encyclicals, letters of emperors of the Roman Empire, Aquinas, Anselm, and Ecumenical councils studied in the Core curriculum. I have learned how to disprove the cynic inside each of us, and look to the proof that so many long for in their journey of faith, the proof which the university is sure to deliver to all students as a service to their “mind, heart, and spirit.” My trouble in my academic journey, however, came not in reconciling the intellect and the spirit, but in reconciling the intellect of faith with the academia of my own field choice. However, the founding of the Catholic Studies Department at Seton Hall University has helped to assuage the difficulty in reconciling the sects of academia. Through my work with the department which strives towards intellectual excellence while encouraging spiritual growth, helps to support the Catholic mission of every academic discipline and field while proving the pertinence, the role, and the utter influence which Catholicism has made and can make in various studies and career paths. It is this principle which has helped my faith experience at Seton Hall University to reach even beyond the reconciliation of the mind and the intellect with the soul and spirituality, but to embrace the total Catholic identity which Seton Hall has exemplified.

Brianna Fitzpatrick is a Junior Diplomacy/International Relations and Catholic Studies Double Major, hailing from New Jersey. Highly respected by Seton Hall University Students and Faculty alike, Brianna has traveled to Rome with the Department of Catholic Studies and has interned at the United Nations in New York City. She is an active member of Saint Paul’s Outreach, a national college evangelization organization that strives to make The Catholic Faith come alive on Universities across the country.
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Group photo of attendees at Saint Paul’s Outreach NJ’s Fan into Flame Retreat, January 2014-
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A trip that became a revelation, the FOCUS Student Leadership Summit

Timothy Hughes ‘17

I write of a conversion experience I had while on a religious retreat, but I would first like to thank the community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Parish (Boonton, NJ) for allowing me to go on FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) Student Leadership Summit in Dallas, Texas, during the first week in January. Without their donation, this would not have been possible, and without their prayer it would have never happened. Let me explain. I had never flown before, so it was going to be by the grace of God alone that I made it to Dallas. Snow was all over January 3rd and I almost had to quit and just accept a refund. However, I am sure that it was my parish’s prayers that I not only got a flight, but someone as naive as me could go from Newark to Nashville to St. Louis to Houston to Dallas Love Field without any problems.

The first part of my trip in Dallas was called relief. I got into the Hyatt Regency at 2 in the morning so technically my cab ride was part of day 2. However, the next morning was when the fun began. After a quick breakfast, I was stunned to walk into an auditorium filled with 1500 youth waiting for adoration! Photography was not allowed in the hotel, so pictures were very limited, but this time in prayer happened for the next three days and was truly a great blessing.

The second part of my trip is called confusion. FOCUS created nine topics they thought were most important to take back to Campus. From the nine they created 3 groups. This sounded confusing to me and is definitely the hardest for me to explain, but I will try. The first day I learned about prayer. When I had finished my individual session, they divided us into yet another small group, where I would explain the session I went to, then learn about the Bible Study Session and the Evangelization session from the other kids in my small group who were chosen to go to that individual session. After three days the idea was all nine ideas would be presented and we would have the ability to teach.

The third part of my trip is called beauty. On the second to last night, we had a two and a half hour adoration from 10PM-12:30AM. I still had not recovered from my lack of sleep on the first night, and was dreading this period, for I knew I was going to fall asleep. However, what happened reduces me to tears even a month later. They had the same room with 1500 kids, except the monstrance was the only thing lit. The monstrance had a beautiful array of gold and white light coming from the floor accompanied by two spotlights. This image reminded me of how unworthy I truly am. Fortunately, there was confession available. However, this was not to be held in your average confessional, this was to be held in a slightly smaller room next door for 1200 kids. This sight forced me to be a man and hold back a couple tears, but when I made it to the priest, I lost it. This poor priest had no idea what has coming, but I am so thankful for
him (and his Irish accent). I made my way back to the main room and just as I sat down a priest went up on the altar. But it was only 11:30, how could it be over? The Joke was on me; he walked around for a full hour. The place remained in darkness, with the exception of those two spotlights following the monstrance. This sight was gorgeous and once again I lost it. However, this time I knew despite myself being equally unworthy, I was loved and we all are loved.

The fourth part of my trip I title “SLS Jersey Style.” There was a reason I did not immediately come back to Our Lady of Mount Carmel and thank my benefactors. I wanted to prove to everyone that my Student Leadership Summit did not end with the flight back home. In the following weeks, I helped with another retreat, worked at a parish youth center, soup kitchens, and led the best attended Bible Study at Seton Hall University. But perhaps the word “me” should be replaced by “JC” (Jesus Christ). Without Him, I am nothing.

Lastly, I want everyone to know that we are all leaders. Sometimes we can fall into the trap that tells us we are the future leaders, or we were the leaders. However, a leader is not the president of a country or the CEO of a fortune 500 company. A leader is someone who has the initiative to communicate through exemplary action. Despite struggling with the action part of that statement, I believe SLS has made me closer to Jesus, by allowing me to help others grow closer to Jesus!

Timothy Hughes is a Freshman Classical Studies, Philosophy, and Theology Triple Major at Seton Hall University. Hailing from Boonton, NJ, he serves as a Student Leader within FOCUS (The Fellowship of Catholic University Students) at the University. He currently is involved with three Bible Studies, which educate more than twenty students during each lesson about different aspects of scripture and how they apply to our Catholic Faith.

Seton Hall Chapel at Sunset, March 2014 © Ms. Naomi Endsley’ 15
My experience of Catholicism here at Seton Hall has been quite a life-changing experience. I am sophomore residing at the College Seminary of the Immaculate Conception at St. Andrew’s Hall, on campus at the university. Twenty-seven other men and I from several states and several different countries live and pray together as a community, in order to discern and form our call to serve the Church one day as priests. It is an absolute blessing, and just a small part of the work done here in order to bring souls closer to God.

In addition to my Catholic Theology major, which prepares me to enter major seminary one day, I also major in Catholic Studies. While my Catholic Theology major classes are mostly filled with seminarians, my Catholic Studies classes allow me to interact with another group of students here at Seton Hall, which has allowed me to developed good relationships with even more people. Catholicism can often be very simply described as a relationship; through our faith, we seek to conform ourselves as closely as we can to the perfection found in God, and this happens when we grow closer and closer to him. Studying from another point of view the value of St. Thomas Aquinas’ work, the emergence of monasticism, and writing a paper on the importance and relevance of the Second Vatican Council were all things within the Catholic Studies major that I otherwise never would have been able to do. I am blessed to have been able to take on this extra course work!

Seton Hall enjoys great Campus Ministry: priests, brothers, sisters, and lay young adult leaders who work tirelessly to minister to the needs of the campus in order to show them the truth found in Jesus Christ. Catholic colleges and universities certainly have a responsibility to undertake this work, and Seton Hall does not dodge this important task. The youth and young adults today are the members of the Church tomorrow. I have been blessed to participate in a number of events run by FOCUS, a wonderful apostolate and example of the “New Evangelization” called for by Pope John Paul II. When the young adults and youth of the Church fall in love with Jesus Christ and have a vigor for the faith, one cannot help but be filled with hope for how the Holy Spirit will guide the church in years to come.

The priest community here at Seton Hall is perhaps something that we take for granted at times. We at Seton Hall actually enjoy the most priests at a college campus in the United States! We have Archbishop Hebda living in Xavier Hall! God alone is to thank for these immense blessings, and it is important to keep these things in mind. We have such easy and close proximity to the sacraments, the greatest signs of God's love for his people. The priests on campus act as great examples for people like me, hoping to one day serve God’s Church as a holy priest. Yet, they serve as examples to the whole campus as people devoted to others. The accessibility
of many of them is a great service to many college students, who may not have a fixed image of who a priest is. In my opinion, I think it is so critical to get the point across that priests are mostly normal men fulfilling God’s call in their life; it is everyone’s call to serve God in whatever vocation God calls them to, whether it be the married life, single life, religious life, or priesthood.

Perhaps the greatest facet of Seton Hall being a Catholic University is the ability to speak freely and without restraint about the faith! I have been able to have so many great conversations about the faith with not only students but teachers and staff members. There is no need to hide our faith; we see many reminders of it every day, perhaps most obvious in the crucifixes that hang in many of the classrooms and buildings throughout our campus. Life begins and ends with God, and so do our events here at Seton Hall. In speaking to others about my vocation, I have been able to answer many questions about the faith. Even in playing in the intramural sports leagues, our seminary always invites our opponents to say a prayer of thanksgiving after each game. Fostering a positive Catholic culture at the University, opposing our secular culture that dictates many mainstream opinions and lifestyles, is certainly a growing responsibility of Seton Hall. Yet, Seton Hall works well to counter these issues with the continuing focus on Christ and the love he has for the world.

Much of the work of the Holy Spirit is seen with the emergence of the Catholic Studies Program. Bringing John Allen, a renowned Catholic speaker and internationally-known reporter, was just the start of an emerging circuit of speakers. Intellectual formation as human beings is vital, and through the Catholic Studies Program, college students are able to take a variety of classes related to Catholicism that helps men and women grow into knowledgeable adults. Pope Francis, through his recent Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, has encouraged Catholics to be evangelizers; we are certainly fulfilling that call here at Seton Hall.

Peter Gallagher ’15 is a junior seminarian at the College Seminary of the Immaculate Conception at St. Andrew’s Hall majoring in Catholic studies. He hails from Haddonfield, NJ and is a seminarian for the Diocese of Camden.

Hosts in the Paten of Father Warren Hall, Director of Campus Ministry, at Saint Paul’s Outreach NJ’s Fan into Flame Retreat, January 2014- © 2014 Ms. Brianna Fitzpatrick’ 15
“John, I need an Assistant Catechist for the Second Grade this year. Would you be willing to take that role?” Sister Lois Curry, O.P. asked me that question six years ago, just as I walked into Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church’s (my home parish) 9th Grade CCD class. Sister Lois was the Director of Religious Education at the church. Even as a ninth grader, I was known as a “Yes-man” within my parish, often eager to help in any capacity that I could. I immediately said I would help out, even though I did not like little children. The opportunity to prepare children for their first Penance and Eucharist appealed to me. I did not know at the time, but that simple “Yes” would lead to bigger and better roles within my parish and later at Seton Hall University.

Mother Teresa said that “The Fruit of Love is Service.” We are called in the Gospels to love one another as Christ has loved us. So many people misconstrue that statement as asking Catholic-Christians to go out and build a Church, and they are actually semi-correct. People are not called to construct a building; they are implored to build a Community of Believers. For me, the answer to that calling has come through various ministries, including Altar Serving, Sacristaning, and especially, teaching. Teaching the Catechism means the most to me of any role that I have had the pleasure of serving as within the Church.

Some Catholics feel the need to hide their faith, as if it is something they should keep only to themselves. I tried that philosophy for a time in my life. For some reason, I could not stick with the idea of hiding my faith. Hiding it meant that I had shame in being a Catholic-Christian, even though my faith brings joy to my daily life. I think that joy occurs because I recognize God has an everlasting love for me, and that I must respond to that love. Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, says that “Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love.” Service, in my case, sharing my faith through teaching, is a simple way of sharing God’s love with others. During my time at Seton Hall, I have taught a weeknight Religious Education class at Our Lady of Sorrows Church in South Orange, NJ, among other volunteer positions I have held. It is in this class, however, where God has taught me as much as I have taught my students, who can number up to thirty seventh and eighth graders on a Monday night.

Unlike my “yes” to Sister Lois, I made the decision to share my faith in the South Orange community after praying about it. I happened to attend a Mass for St. Josemaría Escrivá’s feast day at Our Lady of Sorrows just before my freshman year at Seton Hall University- and to
be honest; I did not even know the church existed, let alone that it was a fixture in the South Orange community, much like my home parish is in my own community. During Mass, I recognized that this was the place where I would preach the message of Jesus Christ the following year— in some capacity. I had a peace within my heart, a longing to work with this strange, but new, community. I contacted the Director of Religious Education, Joan Csderik, who asked that I serve as catechist for a seventh-grade class. Without an interview, and only attending Mass at the church once in my life, I was the official catechist for the seventh grade. I had my own classroom for the first time. That Joan had placed me without even an interview surprised me but I figured that this was just further indication that teaching was God’s plan for me.

I am now almost through my second year as a catechist at Our Lady of Sorrows, and every week, no matter what happens in the class, I leave a happier person than when I walked into the classroom. My usual eight students, six of whom I also had for seventh grade, have consistently indicated, though they do not realize it, that I made the right decision to teach. I will never forget my first night on Prospect Street (where the Church sits) because several students said “Are you kidding?” when I introduced myself as their teacher. The fact that I am only six years older than they are somehow lends credibility to what I speak, and I do not know why. Pope John Paul The Great, speaking to the people gathered at World Youth Day 2002, said, “The future is in your hearts and in your hands. God is entrusting to you the task, at once difficult and uplifting, of working with him in the building of the civilization of love.” The New Evangelization starts with students and young adults taking responsibility for their faith and sharing it with others. People want to hear this Gospel, literally this “Good News.” The attentive looks on my students’ faces (however small a sample size they are) prove that young people are hungry for Christ’s message. Week in and week out, I challenge my students to better know Christ through prayer and service. I open up each class by asking each student a very direct question, that is “How have you encountered Christ since we last met?” The responses get better each week that I work with the kids. The responses have evolved from “I made my siblings’ beds” to “I went to Church on my own” or “I asked my mom to drive me so I could go to Confession on Saturday evening.” These kids get the memo that the Faith is important, and it is not because of me. The Holy Spirit has given me an ability to work with these now seventh and eighth graders in ways I never foresaw happening. With God all things are possible.

Many people do not understand that when we give our time or our talents back to God, he gives us greater things in return. As much as people follow the calling of the New Evangelization, they will receive many blessings from Our Lord, or so I have experienced. I am an introvert by nature, yet here I am sharing Christ weekly with relative strangers. That’s not me working; those actions are evidence of God’s working through me. I have given him my time, two hours a week—it is not much. In return, he has deepened my faith and convictions, strengthened my public speaking skills, built up my resume, and revealed one of my vocations, one of his callings for me, in my life. My experiences at Our Lady of Sorrows and Our Lady of Mount Carmel have indicated that God wants me teaching in a classroom—exactly where, I do not know.
God, through the example of so many other educators in my life- whether they are family, friends, or actual teachers- has shown me that the way I live my life can impact others. It is not just in the ninety minutes that I teach each week. It is in the way I live in my life. St. Josemaria Escriva, founder of Opus Dei, emphasized that we can live Saintly lives doing relatively simple things. It is the smile on a face, the holding of a door, the attendance at Mass, the academic integrity, that shows others who I am. I am not just John Hughes, I am also God’s child. We all have an obligation to preach the Gospel, my way just happens to be through teaching.

John P. Hughes ’16 is the Editor-in-Chief of Arcadia, the Department of Catholic Studies Student Journal. A Sophomore Secondary/Special Education and History double major from Boonton, NJ, he also will pursue a minor in Catholic Studies. He is involved in Campus Ministry through his employment as a Sacristan as well as his participation in activities ran by the Division of Volunteer Efforts and his role as a member of Extended Household for Saint Paul’s Outreach.
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