

Reflections on Regency



Jesuits often find themselves in strange and surprising places, engaged in apostolic work they never imagined. In August, 2005, I was assigned to teach freshmen and sophomore theology at Cheverus High School, Portland, Maine.

Teenagers were mysterious creatures to me. What would I say to them? How could I possibly relate to them? I entered the Jesuits at 39 years old, after a career in business. I was equally comfortable in a barroom or a boardroom – but a high school classroom? No way!

Despite my misgivings, an older Jesuit told me, “The most important thing is to let those kids know that you love and care for them.” Still filled with fears and anxieties, I wondered how I was going to proceed.

My choice seemed clear: I could, like countless Jesuits before me, count on God’s grace and allow God to use my talents for good – or I could cave in to my doubts and fears.

I showed up each day and let my students know that I cared about them. I tried to reflect God’s love for each of them. Here were 115 complicated little, and not so little, human beings in front of me every day, from different circumstances and with varying needs. Like all of us, they shared one need: to know that they were cared for and loved.

Some needed some toughness; others needed an encouraging word. I was honest and sincere with the students – about theology, about my own faith, and about whatever topics they raised. I showed up at school plays, band concerts, award ceremonies, and countless swim meets, basketball, football, soccer, hockey and baseball games. I was available between classes and after school. I soon realized that who I was resonated with them more than what I said.

As I reflect on my teaching experience, I realize that I did nothing extraordinary. I just tried to get out of God’s way and to allow God to use me, despite my limitations, to reveal God’s love for those entrusted to my care. What is most important is that we love and care for those we encounter every day. It is an invitation which God extends to each of us!

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