



The Faith-Justice Institute Service-Learning: An Ignatian Perspective

The Saint Joseph's University's (SJU) Faith-Justice Institute Service-Learning program is rooted in the application of Ignatian Pedagogy and significant Catholic theological doctrines. SJU's Service-Learning program seeks to form "men and women of competence, conscience and compassionate commitment" (*The Characteristics of Jesuit Education*, Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach, SJ.)

Ignatian Pedagogy and SJU Service-Learning

The paradigm of Ignatian Pedagogy (Context, Experience, Reflection, Action) is manifested in the structure and criteria of SJU's service-learning courses. "It (The mission of the Society Jesus) is a mission rooted in the belief that a new world community of justice, love and peace needs educated persons of competence, conscience and compassion, men and women who are ready to embrace and promote all that is fully human, who are committed to working for the freedom and dignity of all peoples, and who are willing to do so in cooperation with others equally dedicated to the reform of society and its structures" (*Ignatian Pedagogy* 17, pg 6.) Service-Learning courses offer students the opportunity to personally encounter the perspectives of marginalized populations and return to the classroom where their intellect and personal values will be challenged to be developed with the perspective of the poor.

Thus through two educational settings (community and traditional classroom), service-learning "...teacherspresent the patterns, relationships, facts, questions, insights conclusions, problems, solutions and implications which a particular discipline brings to light about what it means to be a human being. Education thus becomes a carefully reasoned investigation through which the student forms or reforms his or her habitual attitudes towards other people and the world" (*Ignatian Pedagogy*, 15, pg 6.)

Finally, "Ignatian Pedagogy is inspired by faith. But even those who do not share this faith can gather valuable experiences from this document because the pedagogy inspired by St. Ignatius is profoundly human and consequently universal" (*Ignatian Pedagogy*, 6, pg 3.) With the cornerstone of Catholic faith, SJU service-learning courses implement Ignatian Pedagogy across disciplines in a context that engages holistic formation of the student as a man and woman with and for others.

SJU Service-Learning and the Catholic Theological Doctrines

SJU Service-Learning Program is committed to the use of Ignatian Pedagogy grounded philosophically in the Catholic theological doctrines of Creation, Fall, Incarnation, Redemption, and Resurrection/Destiny. Service-Learning courses manifest the values of each of these doctrines (.). Since service-learning and Ignatian pedagogies are intended for any discipline, the doctrines are applied, rather than explicit, in non-theology service-learning courses. A theology service-learning class might indeed address the

creation, the fall, etc., directly, but courses in other disciplines employ the philosophical grounding of each doctrine as described below.

The doctrine of Creation speaks of humankind being created in the image and likeness of our Trinitarian God. We are thus relational beings who are dependent on one another to grow personally and communally. This view of the human person is the basis for the promotion of the value of all human beings, a value that is at the center of SJU's Service-Learning Program. Service-Learning courses therefore discuss issues of dignity and respect, equality, and inclusivity of community partner clients. Additionally Service-Learning community partners all work with marginalized communities which through class discussions, reflection and assignments emphasize the inherent value of all people.

The doctrine of the Fall addresses the reality that sin has entered the world through original sin, through individual sin, and through sinful social structures. Service-Learning courses ask students to reflect on their own personal responsibilities with their service site population as well as to examine systemic injustice. Furthermore, through class discussions, assignments and reflection students examine issues of discrimination.

The doctrine of the Incarnation affirms that the manifestation of Jesus Christ as human is a demonstration of God's willingness to enter the human condition, and especially the experience of those who suffer innocently and are at the margins of society. Reflecting God's unconditional concern for those with the least, Service-Learning courses promote a clear understanding of solidarity with the poor, the common good, concepts of equality, inclusivity and just distribution of resources, to enable students to become agents of positive change.

The doctrine of Redemption speaks of how we are redeemed through Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. The connection between community and individuals is the Cross and redemptive love and justice of Jesus Christ. The Service-Learning Program intentionally selects community partners who work with marginalized populations. This allows Saint Joseph's University students to encounter the wounded and suffering Christ in today's world context and to thus share the love of neighbor by feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, caring for the sick, visiting the imprisoned, and being present to the unseen and voiceless (Matthew 25.) Additionally, community partnerships are long-term mutually beneficial relationships between with the University and local community. Students learn from the community and intentional relationships formed that model inclusivity, unconditional acceptance and reciprocity.

The doctrine of Resurrection/Destiny speaks of the fulfillment of our potential as persons made in the images and likeness of God. We are striving for fulfillment and co-creatorship in building the Kingdom of God. The Ignatian paradigm of Experience, Reflection, and Action used in Service-Learning courses fosters the development of service-learning students to their fullest potential. Discussions on charity versus justice, notions of positive and negative freedom of community partners' clients to achieve personal goals, and specific discipline-focused solutions to social problems all engage service-learning students in understanding their current world, imagining a new world and, in the long run, participating in the creation of a new world.