A Global Ethic: Justice for Women, Children and Disabled Persons

Vincentian Mission: Opportunity and Responsibility-XVIII in the Series

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In this series, Vincentian Research Faculty from across the University share their experience in actualizing the Mission through their research, teaching and service. Below, Dr. Martone, Associate Professor of Theology, describes her global approach to ethical issues encountered by women, children and “wounded warriors.”

As a moral theologian, my current research interests cover two main areas which reflect Vincentian concern for justice for all people, especially the vulnerable. The first is a concern for justice for women and children and the second involves health care, specifically just distribution of health care for those who are chronically ill or disabled.

For several years now, I have been working on women’s issues with other professors from St. John’s as a “faculty expert” representing the Holy See Mission at the United Nations. Here I learned directly from women from many countries of the great injustices that women and children suffer throughout the world. As a result of this work, I have developed a graduate theology course entitled, “Women, Children, and Justice.” In this course we look at Catholic social teaching from a gendered perspective. While it has often been said that Catholic social teaching is the church’s best kept secret, I argue that there is a better kept secret. There are important gender dimensions that have not been adequately examined in the church’s social teaching. We cannot answer the call to give a “preferential option for the poor” without recognizing that the majority of the poor are women and children, who sometimes have special needs. The course objectives are:

1. Students will study UN documents to become more aware of the worldwide injustices toward women and children.
2. Students will examine Catholic Social Teaching to see how these issues are addressed by the church.
3. Students will look at other theological writings that might contribute to the social documents.
4. Where Catholic Social Teaching ineffectively addresses these issues, students will be encouraged to creatively suggest how one might move this tradition forward.
5. Through their individual projects, students will begin to apply their findings to the individual contexts of their chosen country.
In regard to chronic health care and disability, many injustices can be found in the health care system. Our health care system is front-loaded with most of the resources given to acute care and very few resources given to chronic care and those with disabilities. As our population ages with more and more individuals living longer, we can no longer ignore these concerns.

In addition, we live in a time when many of our warriors come home from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with multiple disabilities. In 2007 I received the first fellowship in disability ethics from Weill Cornell Medical School and the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City where I examined disability issues from a clinical perspective. In the Summer of 2008 I gave a presentation on caring for individuals with traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) at Landstuhl Medical Center in Germany to the staff members who care for the warriors who have been wounded in the wars. I also helped to organize a conference on disability, which was held at St. John’s in Spring of 2007.

I have incorporated much of this research into my undergraduate course on “Moral Theology of Health Care.” In this class, I teach a section on disability and also cover many of the neuroscience issues that are involved with health care. Neuroethics is a new branch of ethics that works hand-in-hand with the neurosciences. This is where much of the cutting edge research is being done. I’ve also added a service learning dimension to this course. Students have the opportunity to work with the Long Island Head Injury Association of Long Island. Here they meet individuals with head injuries and gain a greater appreciation of what obstacles are placed in the lives of these persons as a result of their injury. As with the members of the military, many of the individuals with brain injuries are young. Students not only learn about these individuals but learn a great deal about themselves and about how one’s life can be changed in a moment.

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Information Technology and Lenovo are offering a wonderful opportunity to full-time St. John’s faculty. Apply for a Tablet PC by writing a paper about your innovative teaching project. This article would demonstrate the values and benefits of teaching using technology. For applications, stop by the Technology Learning Center (TLC)--Bent 447, ext. 6402 (Queens) or DaSilva 108 A, ext. 4589 (Staten Island).

Multi-tasking?
Our students are allegedly masters of multitasking, juggling study, text messages, and podcasts at once. But is this really possible? Are their brains really that different from those of past generations. In an article in The New Atlantis, a journal of technology and society, Christine Rosen cites evidence to the contrary. She examines cognitive research and explains what the human brain can—and cannot—do. The article is available at http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/the-myth-of-multitasking.
Professor Joseph Adolphe (Fine Arts, adolphej@stjohns.edu) published portraits of senators Obama and McCain for Teaching Tolerance Magazine (September 2008); also has a large scale drawing included in the current exhibition, “Change,” at the Kehler Liddell gallery in New Haven, CT.

Dr. Dolores Augustine (History, augustid@stjohns.edu) gave a lecture entitled “Red Prometheus: Engineering and Dictatorship in East Germany, 1945-1991” at the National Air and Space Museum Seminar in Washington, D.C. (June 2008); and gave a paper entitled “Atomic Utopias and Dystopias in Divided Germany During the Cold War” at the annual meeting of ISSEI (International Society for the Study of European Ideas) in Helsinki, Finland (July 2008).

Dr. Elaine Carey (History, careye@stjohns.edu) presented “The Students Confront the Gorillas: Militarization in Mexico 1968 to the Present” at the University of Detroit Mercy and the James Guadalupe Carney Latin American Solidarity Archive (CLASA) in Detroit, MI (September 2008); was a participant in “A 40 años del 68: Diálogo entres dos generaciones: 1968-2008” at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana—Iztapalapa (October 2008).

Dr. José G. Centeno (Communication Sciences and Disorders, centenoj@stjohns.edu), presented a paper, “Evidence-based Principles to Serve Bilingual Aphasic Persons,” at the State of Research on Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Populations: Establishing Our Foundation and Advancing Our Science Conference, sponsored by Division 14 (Communication Sciences and Disorders in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Populations) of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, in Albuquerque, NM (June 2008); co-authored a paper, “Assessing Frequency Effects on Verb Inflection Use by Spanish-speaking Agram-matic Individuals: Theoretical and Clinical Implications,” at the Congress of the International Clinical Phonetics and Linguistics Association in Istanbul, Turkey (June 2008); and presented a paper, “Rehabilitation of Bilingual Persons with Aphasia: Challenges, Theoretical Principles, and Future Directions,” at the International Aphasia Rehabilitation Conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia (July 2008).

Dr. Zhe-Sheng Chen (Pharmaceutical Sciences, chenz@stjohns.edu) co-presented with students two papers, “Cepharanthine Is a Potent Reversal Agent for MRP7-Mediated Multidrug Resistance” and “Differential Effects of the EGFR Tyrosine Kinase Inhibitor AG1478 on the Function of ABCB1 and ABCG2,” at the Annual North American ABC Meeting in Frederick, MD (September 2008); invited a visiting scholar, Jefferson Lee from the University of Bath, England, to do cancer research at his lab for one year (September 2008).

Dr. Marie-Lise Gazarian (Languages and Literature, gazariam@stjohns.edu) was invited by the Biblioteca Nacional of Santiago de Chile to give a special address, “Gabriela Mistral, tal como era/Gabriela Mistral Remembered,” at a Conference celebrating the return of the manuscripts of Gabriela Mistral to Chile (April 2008); was interviewed by Patrimonio Cultural sponsored by the Chilean Ministry of Education for a special edition on Gabriela Mistral; was invited to take part in a documentary film on Gabriela Mistral; was invited by the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, Quito, Ecuador to give a keynote address, “Jorge Carrera Andrade, Benjamín Carrión y Gabriela Mistral: Texturas de tres humanistas sudamericanos con alcance universal / Jorge Carrera Andrade, Benjamín Carrión and Gabriela Mistral: The Main Characteristics of three South American Humanists with Universal Outreach” (August 2008) and published in La Casa; was invited to Riobamba, Ecuador, to represent Natella Astuto, the wife of Dr. Philip Astuto, Professor Emeritus, a four-volume compilation by Dr. Astuto on Espejo, with an introduction by Dr. Gazarian, came out in Riobamba (August 2008); accepted a plaque dedicated to him, during the presentation Dr. Gazarian was awarded the Cultural Merit Award “Manuel Benjamín Carrión / Galardón al Mérito
in New York; directs *Entre Rascacielos*, the on campus journal of creative writing in Spanish.


**Professor Diane M. Himmelbaum** (Fine Arts, himmelbd@stjohns.edu) had a one-person exhibit at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Steinhardt Conservatory Gallery (June – September 2008).

**Dr. Chaman L. Jain** (Economics and Finance, jainc@stjohns.edu) gave a video interview, on “Teaming Up with Suppliers,” to Carol Hymowitz, Senior Editor of the *Wall Street Journal* (June 2008); published an article, “Thinking About Tomorrow: Seven Tips for Making Forecasting More Effective,” in the *Wall Street Journal* in collaboration with *MIT Sloan Management Review* (July 2008); gave two lectures, “Modeling: Business Forecasting,” and “Importance of Forecasting in Business Planning and Forecasting” at the Devi Ahilya University, Indore, India (July 2008); and presented a paper on “Collaboration: Key to Better Forecasting and Planning” at the Global Business and Technology Associations, Madrid, Spain (July 2008).

**Dr. Anna D. Martin** (Economics and Finance, martina@stjohns.edu) co-authored the article, “Influence of Disclosure and Governance on Risk of U.S. Financial Services Firms Following Sarbanes Oxley,” in the *Journal of Banking and Finance* (2008).

**Dr. Laura Schramm** (Biological Sciences, schramml@stjohns.edu) published an article, “Differential Expression of the TFIIIB Subunits Brf1 and Brf2 in Cancer Cells,” in *BMC-Molecular Biology*, and published a laboratory manual *Molecular and Cellular Biology* (Bent Tree Publishers, August 2008).

**Dr. Abu Serajuddin** (Pharmaceutical Sciences, serajuda@stjohns.edu) presented a lecture on “Dosage Form Development for the New Generation of Poorly Water-Soluble Drugs: Challenges and Strategies” at the Annual Eastern Pharmaceutical Technology Meeting, Somerset, NJ (September 2008).

**Dr. Richard Stalter** (Biological Sciences, stalterr@stjohns.edu) presented the paper, “Thirty Years of Community Development in a Gamma Irradiated Pine Oak Forest in Brookhaven National Laboratory,” at the Annual Pine Barrens Research Forum “Current Challenges and Future Solutions” (October 2008).

**Sister Barbara Sudol CSFN, DA** (English, sudolcsb@stjohns.edu) published two books: *Mystical Elements in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot*, and *Midlife Magnificat and Thereafter* (VDM Verlag Dr. Mueller Publishers in Germany).

**Professor Lawrence Waldron** (Fine Arts, waldronl@stjohns.edu) presented a paper, “House of Spices: The Myriad Origins of the Gingerbread House,” at the Annual Conference of the Caribbean Studies Association in San Andres, Colombia (May 2008).

**Faculty News**

If you would like to send an entry to “Faculty News,” the deadline for the November issue is **November 3**. We prefer that you email the information to CTL@stjohns.edu. Please have your entries follow the style presented in “Faculty News.” Material included in CTL Faculty News will be sent to Dominic Scianna for distribution in a news release.
Each summer at St. John’s, when some of us are in the midst of teaching summer session classes, and others are taking a well-earned break or delving in to our research, a mammoth mechanism is at work as well - wheels turning, gears shifting, populations moving in and out. Known as New Student Orientation (NSO), these three-day sessions take place in June, July and August, introducing incoming freshman to the whole wide world of St. John’s University. The components are many and faculty members, who have been part of the process for the last three years, for their part serve as ambassadors of St. John’s academic world, engaging students on the first day of orientation in mini classes about academic expectations, student/professor communication procedures and the like.

This past summer, things were a little different, though. Whereas in the past, an outside vendor “Big Onion” provided tours of lower Manhattan for students and faculty as part of NSO, this season, faculty themselves led these tours – an initiative suggested by NSO faculty member Dr. Robert Forman and enthusiastically embraced by all NSO faculty members. And in connection with St. John’s Vincentian mission, whereas in past years students were brought to one of St. John’s many service sites and given a little talk by a representative of the site, this year students actually performed services at these sites. They worked in soup kitchens – washing lettuce, cleaning dishes, serving food; they packed bags and boxes of food - tons of food! - at pantries for delivery to the community food providers; they visited senior citizens at senior centers and nursing homes, ate lunch with them, danced with them; they delivered meals to homebound folks in their apartments.

The second day of orientation on the Queens Campus – service day, tour day – began for faculty (students met even earlier for talks in the big white tent - perhaps you have noticed it looming in the faculty parking lot?) in Montgoris Cafeteria – oh, what a huge, noisy hub of activity it was: students assigned in small groups in their pre-determined spots corresponding to their service area, meeting their student leaders and faculty for the day’s events; bag lunches prepared and waiting on long tables, to be grabbed by each on the way out to waiting vans – a sea of vans, each van heading out to a different service site. And at the appointed time, off they went for the service adventure, after which, all were taken to St. John’s Manhattan campus for a bit of rest and regrouping.

At this point, an important part of this process took place - a period of reflection - an hour’s time during which, in small (and sometimes not so small) groups - faculty, students, student leaders and administrators took time to debrief from their service experience and prepare for the tour of lower Manhattan, which came at the end of the day – well, at the end of the faculty’s day, that is. Students and student leaders went on to a late afternoon cruise and party – apparently youth really does have endless energy.

As a faculty member who took part in all this – the academic expectations class, in the service experience, and leading groups of students on the tour around lower Manhattan, I was curious how students would react to their perhaps unexpected service duties, and how a reflection on their service experience might help guide and inform the tour I was to lead them on in the following hours. How would they react to having to serve food to strangers? Interact with the elderly? Do manual labor for those less fortunate? How could I guide them to be wide awake and receptive on the upcoming tour? I wanted to remember what happened this summer. So, I collected responses from these reflection sessions throughout the summer as a way of assessing the experience for myself. And here is what I found...

In the reflection room, at least two, and usually three service site visits were represented, and it made for a variety of responses. The first order of business was to get students talking about their experiences with each other, so into groups they went – each group consisting of students from one site. Before long, the room was alive with the sound of stories being told. Each week, students across the board felt comfortable and, yes, eager, to share memories of their experiences. In order to capture some of these, I asked students to consider images that still remained in their “mind’s eye” – and to describe these images in words and phrases. Now, as I look at my lists of their images, I not only remember each student whose
particular memory it was, but it’s as though the words and phrases have become containers for the stories they represent. For example:

*Blues eyes trying to talk*
This is the container for the memory of a student who tried to talk to an elderly woman at a nursing home who couldn’t seem to speak. Instead, she looked at the student with her “blue eyes.” Someone had then told the student that this woman could only answer things very simply. In response to the question: “What did you do when you were younger?” the answer was: “surgeon.” This story gave rise to a discussion in our room about youth and aging and how you never know what someone’s “back story” is until you ask.

*Clothing room*
The student who reported this image described a room at his service site devoted to providing clothing for people who might not have anything to wear on job interviews. He said it had never occurred to him that someone wouldn’t have the right clothes to wear.

“Thank you, God bless you. It looks beautiful.”
This was the response of an elderly woman whose nails had just been polished by the student reporting back. He was sure he had done a terrible job, but she was very grateful. (If I might be permitted an aside here - the image I had of a young student on his knees applying nail polish to a stranger’s nails...was quite powerful.

*GED – my only chance*
A student had been asked to file some papers at his service site and he came across one in which the form asked why someone wanted to get the GED for which this person was applying. The response on the form was that it was “my only chance.”

Of course, not all the images in words and phrases were lovely and inspirational. Some students saw things that disturbed them and some noticed their own discomfort:

*Worried sad parents – happy children...another day*
Some guests at a soup kitchen were entire families, and this student observed the concern on the faces of the parents versus the seemingly oblivious happiness of their kids – and that this was probably the way it was every day for this family.

*Some people were really nice, and others asked if that was all we had*

*I didn’t want them to think we were better than they were*

*I wanted to observe without staring*

*Wow, he was talking to me* (referring to a homeless man)

The reflection moved on to a preparation for the tour next. The focus of my particular tour of lower Manhattan was the notion of “symbol;” how we can read the world through the lens of symbol. In order to get us thinking in this way, I asked students to create, together, a single symbol of their service experiences. These symbols varied over the weeks. They contained hearts, circles (“you get and you give back”), question marks, hands giving and receiving, spirals (the cycle of youth and aging). I had feared that students would be put off by the intensity of their experiences at the service sites. Not the case!!! To connect to the impending tour, I then handed out pencils and paper, asking students to consider themselves now – how they were in transition, moving from the known (high school, home) into the unknown (College) and to create a symbol for themselves of where they were right now in their lives, as they looked to the future. These were private symbols but some students were eager to share their work and there was a rich and wonderful variety of ideas.
The tour itself began at The African Burial Ground, rich in symbols of the African Diaspora and concluded, after several other stops, at St. Paul’s Chapel, directly across from the World Trade Center site. The last activity was one that asked students to consider as a final symbol the concept of sacred space. Here we were, with our backs to one of the oldest public structures in use in the city today – a sacred space made by humans – a species that seems to believe in sacred spaces – and facing another sacred space created by the terrible events that happened there seven years ago. What were sacred spaces in their lives growing up? What sacred spaces would they now create in their new lives?

New Student Orientation ’08 was an amazing undertaking for all concerned – a spectacular feat of engineering. It was more than that though. I’m just reporting my own experiences. Imagine that multiplied many times over – by each faculty member, student leader and administrator volunteer who was part of it. Something important happened here, and it was made possible by an immense open-mindedness – and an embracing of so many different sensibilities. We worked together. We shared our University and our city with our new freshmen. And in doing so, we came together in a way that...well, that feels pretty good! I’m proud to have been part of it.

Teaching Is Work
Maura C. Flannery (College of Professional Studies, flannerm@stjohns.edu)

While there are all kinds of great ideas for improving your teaching, the best way to do it is simply to work harder at it. This does not seem to be a very attractive or helpful suggestion, especially because you probably feel overworked as it is. Don’t worry, I am not suggesting that you put in more hours of preparation or have more office hours, but rather that you work harder in the classroom. I have come to this conclusion after observing a number of master teachers over the years. They have very different styles and approaches; some are low-keyed, others are just bubbling with energy; some are very friendly with their students, others are definitely not pals. But in every case, they do not let up the whole time they are in the classroom. From the moment they walk in the room, they are engaging students.

“Engagement” is obviously the word of the moment, but I have to admit that it’s a good one. That’s just what we want: students who are fully involved in their learning inside and outside of class. But to accomplish this, I’m convinced that we have to be fully engaged as well—every minute in every class. That commitment is contagious. The teachers that I am describing here have engaged students because they make sure that they do. If someone is not on task, that student is called to task. There are no students lounging, reading newspapers, checking text messages, studying for other classes, talking, or sleeping. It takes work to cut down on these extracurricular activities, but only at the beginning of the semester. Students figure out pretty quickly that there is no fooling around here.

Still, you say, they could just sit there and daydream. I don’t think so, because they know that they will soon be called on by those working teachers, called on to answer a question, express an opinion, or work out a problem. And even if none of these are at issue at the moment, they still have to take NOTES. What induces them to do this? The simple expedient of the teacher saying from time to time: did you get that down? do you have that? This will snap the daydreamer back to attention. After all, this is almost as good as saying: you better remember this because you are going to see it again on an exam.

Several years ago, I observed a teacher who was supposed to be a master of the art. I was interested to see exactly what magic he had up his sleeve. He turned out to indeed be a gifted teacher. Students were with him the whole class, yet he didn’t do anything very exciting or innovative. He just worked—all the time. He moved around the room—constantly; he called on students by name—often; he reminded them to take notes—frequently. He also told truly bad jokes, but I do think even these contributed to the engagement because students didn’t want to miss them, they wanted to be sure to groan at the right times.
Recently, I heard a talk on teaching by one of our professors and again. As with the previous example, she kept us interested the whole time, and again, she didn’t do anything very spectacular. She organized her talk around a simple acronym, only had one visual—no PowerPoint, and didn’t move around the room at all. Yet I remember a great deal of what she said because she made me really listen—by changing her pace frequently, by injecting humor, and by using examples and stories to make her points. And she never let up. We didn’t have a chance to become bored, we just didn’t have the time for it—she kept whisking us on from point to point.

I’m not sure I have the energy or the personality to replicate either of these performances. However, they are an inspiration and a model to keep me pushing myself, to keep attempting to reach my goal to have 100% engagement, 100% of the time. I don’t think even these masters could achieve this goal, but they come close.

Global Education at Home
As the University’s Discover the World program continues to develop, it’s important to remember that there’s another aspect to global education: enriching all our courses to include a broader perspective and also taking advantage of the rich multicultural resources available in New York. One guide is to look at other institutions that have done just this, and a good place to begin is with materials available from the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).

Diversity Digest
A few years ago, the AAC&U Diversity Digest devoted an entire issue to the subject of global learning. There are were articles on a number of different kinds of initiatives from traditional travel abroad to globalization of the curriculum on home campuses, along with various blends of the two approaches. This publication, which is available at http://www.diversityweb.org/Digest/vol8no3/vol8no3.pdf is full of great ideas. On article, “Looking Within to See the World,” highlights Heritage College’s use of its own student diversity to explore larger global issues. There is also a list of websites which provide further ideas for faculty on how to incorporate a host of international issues into their courses.

A Portal to the World
Another good article from the AAC&U is “A Portal to the World,” about programs at Whittier College in California. It is one of 16 institutions participating in the AAC&U’s Shared Futures: General Education for Global Learning initiative (http://www.aacu.org/SharedFutures/gened_global_learning/index.cfm). Whittier uses a combination of study abroad with campus-centered programs to provide a firm grounding in global issues. This article is available at http://www.aacu.org/aacu_news/aacunews08/october08/feature.cfm.

Closer to Home: Journal Club
If you would like an opportunity to discuss globalizing your courses, the CTL is sponsoring Journal Club luncheons on both the Queens (Wednesday, November 12, noon to 1 p.m. in Library room 110) and Staten Island Campuses (Monday, November 10, noon to 1 p.m., Rosati Conference room) to discuss “Looking Within to See the World” mentioned above (http://www.diversityweb.org/Digest/vol8no3/schmidt.cfm).