

This speech was delivered by Tyler Burke ('12) at morning assembly on Tuesday, January 12, 2010. A Loyola Student is Committed to Doing Justice

At an assembly in late November a group of students received a blessing from Fr. Katsouros. We were embarking on a trip to Georgia to attend the Ignatian Family Teach-in for Justice, protest the School of the Americas, and remember the martyred Jesuits in El Salvador, along with many other deaths attributed to the SOA.

The Ignatian family—a community of believers committed to the promotion of justice in the world—gathered in a convention center where we prayed together, heard speakers, and participated in break-out sessions. Students traveled from Jesuit high schools, colleges, and universities across the United States for this event, many spending 12-15 hours on a bus.

Bill Quigley, the director of law at Loyola University at New Orleans, gave a presentation, which he titled “Social Justice for Life.” He gave suggestions for people who fall off the track of social justice and become consumed with society, especially those who do good works, but then go back to our normal lives, which hamper us from being committed to doing justice. His “five steps” really spoke directly to me because I frequently am hindered from working for justice because of homework, my social life, and leisure time.

First he told us to hold on to the dreams that brought us to Columbus and Ft. Benning. Through whatever hindrances, struggles, and setbacks we have, we must remember the reasons that inspired us to serve in the first place.

Mr. Quigley’s second point is to seek out and treasure hope, joy, and love. If we work against injustice and live in solidarity, our witness can help the oppressed have hope for a more just world, even if change is slow.

The third step is to take the Bible, social teachings, and human rights seriously, and by doing so we can take love seriously. If we can truly love everyone, we can more easily focus on working for justice for everyone. For examples of how to love we can turn to the Gospel and its message for us to love and serve one another.

The last two steps meant the most to me. Step four is to have absolutely no fear, and step five is to comprehend that people are much more important than property. Is it right that many people in the world have two houses while even more people have none?

What does having no fear have to do with service? I remember visiting Camden last year and talking to different people who were either addicts or homeless. At first I was nervous, but I kept thinking about solidarity and said to myself if I can see this person as my brother or sister this conversation will not be too bad. Well, my initial thinking turned into belief. I found that if I could get to a level of viewing the people I served as my brother or sister I could easily love those people, ultimately growing into a person for others.

Bill Quigley closed by saying that there is no such thing as having “no time for justice.” I think that every person deserves justice, and if we really think that we do not

have “time” for justice, that we should make some, because as good as our lives are to us, someone working in a sweatshop or freezing on the street is having a very different life. We are called to look at the oppressed just as Jesus did: with love and compassion. This beautiful calling unites people and makes us strive to create a peaceful and just world. It challenges us to feel the pain of others.

Another speaker at the Teach-in whose ideas really spoke to me was Sarah Berger. She said that we are all sitting at a table of social justice, remembering, forming relationships, and reconciling. Her points helped me to believe that being a man or woman for others is not only helping humankind become better, but also making myself better.

She first called on us to remember the initial understanding of injustice that made us stop and think, “wait, this is wrong.” These feelings show who we truly are because the initial reaction is unbiased by anyone else and completely our own. My first justice calling was the video about the Ignatian Family Teach-in in Christian service class—it was why I went to the Teach-in this year.

Ms. Berger’s second point was to recognize the relationships formed at this table, and how we learn to love everyone unconditionally through them. These relationships help us work toward goals, create friendships, and what I think is very important, to understand different people from different cultures. These relationships help us acknowledge the needs of others and not just our own, leading us to a great Jesuit ideal of being men and women for others.

Seeing other Jesuit high schools, colleges, and universities represented at the Teach-in made my connection to Jesuit schools a more proud and grateful one. I was able to meet people from various places, and knowing that there are other people out there that want to make a difference in the world encouraged me.

Ms. Berger’s final point was to have reconciliation at this table. She did not mean the sacrament of Reconciliation, but the act of reconciling differences. In our modern world there has been hatred, corruption, and exploitation of people. Ms. Berger is asking us to consider how we can put aside these differences. This is what I ask of you all today: how can a Loyola student, who is becoming more committed to doing justice put aside feelings of anger and skepticism about people and their ideals and make time for those oppressed people. If we can really do this then we are making a difference in the world today and helping build a better tomorrow.

I would like to thank Mr. Lyness for inviting me to speak today, and also the whole Loyola community for your support. Thank you!