



Years of Faith and Learning in Action

Our guiding Jesuit philosophy – What it means at Marquette today



□ *St. Ignatius of Loyola*

To help souls. This was the impulse of St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, whose experience of spiritual conversion has wended its way through the centuries and into our present-day experience at Marquette University. By “helping souls,” Ignatius was simply trying to meet people in the deepest and most tender recesses of their lives, and bring them closer to God. In giving the Spiritual Exercises, preaching, serving others in need, and instructing the young,

Ignatius and his small band of friends used any means possible to make themselves available and pliant, to respond to the call of God in their lives.

Among the many ministries of the early Society of Jesus, schools were a tremendously important means for helping souls and bettering the world. Through rigorous, sequenced study and spiritual formation, Ignatius and his companions hoped to elicit from students the deep desires that God had planted in them, and send them forth as leaders in the civic arena and marketplace. The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum, or plan of studies, emphasized the humanities and drew even from the Greek and Roman classics, in the belief that good literature cultivates good human beings who will, in turn, engage in good works and lead holy lives.

More than 460 years after the birth of the Society of Jesus and its first schools, we at Marquette are still very much in the business of “helping souls” in a way that we feel

certain that Ignatius would recognize and encourage.

Of course the education of our students ought naturally to result in meaningful change in our world. For what is a Jesuit university, if not a witness to the transforming love of God? By fully embracing our identity as a Catholic, Jesuit university, Marquette takes a step beyond the teaching of ethics and addition of service programs to our already comprehensive curriculum. We seek to create an indivisible link between what a student learns in the classroom and how that knowledge is shared with those most in need. At Marquette, helping souls means that each student is a steward, rather than an owner, of his or her education.

Solidarity with the poor and marginalized inevitably leads students back to their studies with renewed zeal and to the exploration of faith with deeper questions about themselves and others. When Marquette students engage in international service learning, immersion trips or weekly volunteer activities, they are not doing something extra. Rather, they are engaging a very central element of the education that we promise them. They are being educated and formed as whole persons who will “Be

The Difference” through their day-to-day work and very selves. We should be able to hear the echoes of what our students learned at Marquette in the way they live as spouses, parents, colleagues and friends – and we do.

Helping souls. This is what Jesuit education has always been about and it is what animates and drives us at Marquette University. We are privileged to share in this mission, both time-honored and utterly new with each student who crosses our threshold. In the words of St. Ignatius, we hope to teach our students to “Go and set the world on fire.”

