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Finding God in All Things: Exploring the Implementation of Jesuit
World-Affirming Education at Belen Jesuit Preparatory School

Edmund F. Newborn II

**Finding God in All Things:
Exploring the Implementation of Jesuit World-Affirming Education at
Belen Jesuit Preparatory School**

BY

Edmund F. Newborn II

BA, St. John's University, 2001
MA, Institute of Religious Studies, 2007

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ABSTRACT

As a Jesuit school, Belen Jesuit Preparatory School in Miami, FL is governed by the Principles of Jesuit Education. Its core values are based on the teachings of St. Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises*. One of the first principles is that the education provided in Jesuit schools be “world-affirming.” A world-affirming education is one that follows the Jesuit principle of “finding God in all things.” The study was concerned with how Belen Jesuit could enhance its pedagogy in order to provide a world-affirming education consistent with the Principles of Jesuit Education. The hope was that introducing the concept of teaching as a sacramental act as described by Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore would foster the implementation of this principle.

To evaluate the extent of the world-affirming education provided at Belen Jesuit and indicated where enhancements can be made in this regard, surveys were conducted among the administrators, faculty, and counselors of Belen Jesuit, as well as members of the graduating classes from 2013-2017. In addition, members of the administrative team and department chairpersons were interviewed. It was concluded that the pedagogy of world-affirming education can be enhanced at Belen Jesuit if its teachers begin to see their work as a ministry, if the school community adopts a sacramental worldview that is cross-curricular, and if they begin to see teaching as a sacramental act.

INTRODUCTION

Three years ago I made a dramatic shift in my teaching ministry. Before then I had taught for theology for twelve years in diocesan middle and high schools. Now I was making the transition to a Jesuit school. This shift represented a fundamental change in my ministry. The diocesan schools I had taught at had all their own mission statements but there wasn't a particular charism behind them. Now, in a Jesuit school, the mission statement proceeds from the Ignatian charism.

As a theology teacher in a Jesuit school, it was my responsibility to immerse myself in Jesuit spirituality and educational pedagogy. This thesis project afforded me the opportunity to do so. In my research, I discovered the "Principles of Jesuit Education," which contained several foundational statements about Jesuit educational pedagogy.

I found myself drawn to the first of these principles, which is that "Jesuit education is world-affirming."¹ In the description of what world-affirming education is, I found that it is the Jesuit perspective that there a "radical goodness"² to the world. I wanted to discover if this is really what Belen Jesuit is presenting to its students and if there would be a way in which we could improve our efforts in this area.

In previous research regarding the ministerial nature of teaching, I discovered Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore's work *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*. I found world-affirming education and the sacramental nature of teaching to be a perfect marriage. Therefore I set off to see how to bring the two ideas together.

¹Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., *Go Forth and Teach* (Washington, D.C.: Jesuit Secondary Education Association, 1986), 17.

²Ibid.

The first chapter of the project provides the necessary background on the ministerial concern I addressed, the ministerial setting for the project, as well as my ministerial background. My ministerial concern is about the extent that world-affirming education is being exercised at Belen Jesuit Preparatory School. I felt that providing some historical context for Belen Jesuit would be helpful. I give a brief synopsis of the school's story from its beginnings in Havana, Cuba, to the exile of the Jesuit community that ran the school, culminating in its reemergence in Miami.

An explanation of the core values of Belen Jesuit follows, namely *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*, *Magis*, and *Cura Personalis*. I connect those core values to the Jesuit mantra of “finding God in all things” and world-affirming education. I also provide some background about my personal ministry before outlining my initial claims and intuitions and outlined the practical theological method I have chosen to employ for this project which is Thomas Groome's “shared praxis.” The method follows these steps:

1. Name the activity
2. Reflect on what is done
3. Retell the story of the community
4. Take ownership of the story and internalize it
5. Choose a faith response in light of steps three and four

I complete chapter one by highlighting some of the major authors and sources that I have used in my research.

Chapter two provides a background for Jesuit spiritual and educational pedagogy as well as discussing what the data from the surveys and interviews I conducted revealed. I recall the time of St. Ignatius himself to outline what the Jesuit vision of education and give a brief synopsis of the history of Jesuit education before outlining the major principles of Jesuit educational pedagogy. A connection between Jesuit spirituality and educational pedagogy is

necessary before reviewing what the data from the surveys and interviews revealed. In presenting the data, I use graphs and highlight comments made in surveys conducted with the administration, faculty, and counselors, as well as recent alumni of Belen Jesuit. I also highlight portions of interviews conducted with the administration team and the department chairpersons.

Chapter three discusses the theological undergirding of world-affirming education which is the notion of sacramentality. I look at the development of this concept through the *Spiritual Exercises* itself and provide some background from Thomas Aquinas and his notion of “secondary causes.” The development of this concept is augmented by two contemporary, Jesuit theologians. Karl Rahner discusses transcendent knowledge through categorical reality and Michael Himes writes about people being “beholders of grace.”

Chapter 4 outlines Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore’s notion of teaching as a sacramental act. She explains six acts that can be done to develop this perspective:

1. Expect the Unexpected
2. Remember the dismembered
3. Seek Reversals
4. Give Thanks
5. Nourishing New Life
6. Reconstructing Community and Repairing the World

Mullino Moore’s theory provides the vehicle through which the notion of world-affirming education may be developed

The fifth and final chapter introduces a process toward a new praxis to enhance world-affirming education. It involves three steps for Belen Jesuit: understanding teaching as ministry, developing a sacramental worldview within all facets of the school, and envisioning teaching as a sacramental act. Mullino Moore suggests nine steps to take to develop the idea of teaching as a sacramental act, which I enhance through literature and resources for our stakeholders to read, as well as suggesting a format for implementing this new praxis. It is my hope that our students

will come to find God in what they study, and more importantly, to strengthen their personal bond with God by affirming the goodness of creation.

CHAPTER ONE

Belen Jesuit and World-Affirming Education

The question of whether Christianity should be a world-affirming religion is one that has garnered much debate. Theologically speaking, this question can come down to how one views the Christian doctrine of original sin. If one believes that original sin has corrupted human nature to the core, then such a person may see the world as something which enables the evil within human nature. In such a case, to find communion with God, one must separate her/himself from the world. Christ said to His disciples, “If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you.” (Jn 15:19).

I choose to take a hopeful perspective on the world. It is true that the world may present us with many opportunities and avenues to draw us away from God. Pope Francis has spoken extensively on the dangers of materialism and extreme individualism. However, it is not the world that actively leads us astray, but our own selfish inclinations. If the world is seen in the way God created it, we will see that it is meant to lead us *to* God. Everything that God created is purposeful and good. Creation is affirming of God’s existence and God’s love for humanity.

This view was shared by St Ignatius of Loyola who began the Society of Jesus in 1534. His intention was for the Jesuits to be a missionary order. Since their founding, the Jesuits have been versatile in how they have kept St. Ignatius’ missionary vision. The term “missionary” evokes images of people traveling to foreign lands to bring a new message to the native people. Usually the message is religious in nature. The hope of the missionary is for her/his message to take hold in the local population. When one

examines the history of the Jesuits, one can find plenty of evidence to support this image. One can recall St. Francis Xavier's travelling to the Far East or Sts. John de Brebeuf, Isaac Jogues, and Rene Goupil's being so committed to the Jesuit mission to bring the Gospel to the Native American tribes in southeastern Canada and northwestern New York State that they were not dissuaded with the prospect of martyrdom.

In addition to preaching, the Jesuits have also used education as one of their primary tools in their missionary efforts. From the time they opened their first school in 1548 in Messina, Italy, the Jesuits have prided themselves on the great educational institutions they have established throughout the world. With education becoming such an important part of their mission, the Jesuits established several principles by which their schools would be directed. One of those principles is that each Jesuit school is to provide a world-affirming education for its students. It is within this realm of Jesuit education that I currently find myself exercising my teaching ministry.

MINISTERIAL CONCERN

Belen Jesuit Preparatory School is an all-boys middle and high school that educates approximately 1,500 students in Miami, FL. It has a long and proud history extending all the way back to 1854, when it was known as *Real Colegio de Belen in la Habana*, in Havana, Cuba. As a Jesuit school, it is guided by the *Characteristics of Jesuit Education* which were promulgated in 1987. The first description this document gives of Jesuit education is that it is "world-affirming." My ministerial concern is to what extent the pedagogy of Jesuit Education as it is practiced by the faculty at Belen Jesuit Preparatory School is "world-affirming" as articulated in the

Characteristics of Jesuit Education.

According to its mission statement, Belen Jesuit follows “the Ignatian tradition of excellence,” prides itself on being “a Catholic, Jesuit school,” and operates within “the context of the Catholic faith and Ignatian tradition.”¹ According to the “Principles of Jesuit Education,” a school that describes itself and its operation in such a way is also called to provide a “world-affirming”² education, defined in the Belen Jesuit Faculty Manual as follows:

Jesuit education affirms the radical goodness of the world, tries to create a sense of wonder and mystery in learning about God’s creation, probes the meaning of human life and is concerned with the total formation of each student as an individual personally loved by God.³

An aspect of my ministry is to inform my students about Jesuit spirituality and principles. However, this should not be the task of the teachers of the theology department alone. If the education provided for students at Belen Jesuit is truly world-affirming, then all teachers in all departments should be working together to articulate the Catholic, Jesuit nature of the school’s mission. My concern, therefore, is twofold:

- *To what extent do faculty members across disciplines employ pedagogy informed by Jesuit values so that the education provided at Belen Jesuit is truly “world-affirming?”*
- *How can Belen Jesuit Preparatory School enhance its educational pedagogy to be more truly “world-affirming?”*

¹ *Faculty Manual 2016-2017 Belen Jesuit Preparatory School, Miami, FL*, (Miami: Belen Jesuit Preparatory School, 2016-2017), 6.

²Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., *Go Forth and Teach* (Washington, D.C.: Jesuit Secondary Education Association, 1986), 17.

³ *Faculty Manual*, 8.

THE STORY OF BELEN JESUIT

Zeida Comesañas Sardiñas compiled a complete history of Belen Jesuit entitled *Men for Others: The Belen Jesuit Story*. She has served as an independent historian for Belen Jesuit and her children are graduates of the school. She writes that the original *Colegio de Belen* was founded because of a royal decree by Queen Isabella II of Spain given to three Jesuits (two priests and one religious brother) who had been sent to Cuba in 1853 in order to find a site to build a Jesuit school in Havana.⁴

However, insufficient funds were available to build a new facility. As a compromise, a struggling hospital, which also housed a school, was turned over to the Jesuits to be converted into the school decreed by the Queen. The hospital was managed by sisters of the Bethlehemite religious order who had dedicated it to St. Diego de Alacá and Our Lady of Belen.⁵ The Jesuits decided to keep the name “Belen” for their school to preserve the history of the building they were taking over. Forty students began studying in the converted hospital now named *El Real Colegio de Belen en la Habana* on March 2, 1854. It had been the practice that Jesuit schools be boarding schools, but that was not possible until Spanish troops who had used the hospital for their barracks could find other accommodations. By December 11 of the same year, the Spanish troops were out and ninety-five interns for the school were in.⁶

⁴ Zeida Comesañas Sardiñas, *Men for Others: The Belen Jesuit Story* (Miami, FL: Editorial Cubana, 2014), 16.

⁵ Ibid, 16.

⁶ Ibid, 17.

When the Cuban Republic was established in 1902, the name of the school was changed to *El Colegio de Belen*⁷ to remove reference to the Spanish crown. Despite the difficulties Cuba faced in establishing its independence, the school prospered. Its graduates moved on to some of the finest universities in Europe and the United States and returned home to become some of the greatest leaders and professionals in the new republic.⁸

El Colegio de Belen faced a great crisis when one of its graduates from the Class of 1945, Fidel Castro, seized control of the Cuban government in 1959. At first, Belen was an enthusiastic supporter of its alumnus until his acts of brutality against those who served in the previous regime and those perceived as his enemies were officially denounced by the Catholic leadership in Cuba and beyond.⁹ To show solidarity with the Church, Belen adopted the image of Cuba's Catholic patroness, Our Lady of Charity, for its banner.

At the beginning of the school year in 1960, over 1,000 students were attending class at Belen. The numbers quickly dwindled as many of the families who had their children enrolled there began leaving the country. In many cases, the exodus of Belen families was facilitated by the Jesuits themselves. In January of 1961, the school was occupied by the Cuban militia who began searching the students for any sign that they were opposed to the Castro regime. On September 13, 1961, the Jesuits serving at Belen

⁷ Ibid, 38.

⁸ Ibid, 38.

⁹ Ibid, 73-74.

were deported aboard a Spanish vessel, the *Covadonga*,¹⁰ bound for South Florida. They were held at gun point and told that if they were to ever return, they would be killed.

That officially spelled the end of *El Colegio de Belen* in Havana which was turned into a military installation. It remains so to this day. However, the twenty-six Jesuits who were expelled from Cuba on that day were resolved not to let their school which had already boasted such a long and rich tradition (over 100 years) to simply disappear. Their prospects were not very good at first. There were no Jesuit residences in Miami and no funding or materials at their disposal. When they requested advice from their Superior General, Jean-Baptiste Janssens, S.J., he

...urged them to request assistance from every Jesuit province in North America. In particular, they engaged the help of their Jesuit brothers from the New Orleans Province, which had an established presence in South Florida since the late nineteenth century. They also requested guidance and support from Bishop Coleman F. Carroll at the Diocese of Miami, and worked with Fr. Bryan O. Walsh from the diocese's Catholic Welfare Bureau as part of the Operation Pedro Pan program.¹¹

On August 29, 1961, Bishop Carroll gave his formal approval for the Jesuits to establish a school within his diocese that would take the place of the school they lost in Havana. So, Belen Jesuit Preparatory School was opened in one of the buildings associated with Gesu Church in downtown Miami. While there was open enrollment, many of the students who came there were from Cuban refugee families.¹² When the time came for 1962-1963 academic year, Belen Jesuit moved to an independent location in

¹⁰ Ibid, 78.

¹¹ Ibid, 84.

¹² Ibid, 86.

Little Havana where it remained until 1981. Despite being delayed by Tropical Storm Dennis, the current campus of Belen Jesuit in West Miami-Dade opened on September 14, 1981 where the school resides to the present day.

CORE VALUES OF BELEN JESUIT

Because “Belen Jesuit strives to provide opportunities for spiritual growth and reflection that will enhance our faith,”¹³ it represents an atmosphere that is both welcoming and challenging to students who have had a limited exposure to the Catholic faith. Its goal is to enable them to see the value of seeking to live a faith-centered life. Since our sixth graders and many of our ninth graders are new to our school and to Jesuit education in general, we theology teachers also educate them on the basic history of the Society of Jesus and how its spirituality and educational practices permeate all aspects of their school experience at Belen Jesuit. This begins with a discussion about the core values of our school which come directly from *The Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

The first of these values is *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* (For the Greater Glory of God). Belen Jesuit wants its faculty and students “to work as a community for the greater glory of God.”¹⁴ Ignatius elaborates on this by saying, “Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord... All other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him fulfill the end for which he is created. From this it follows that man

¹³ Kolvenbach, *Go Forth and Teach*, 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

is to use these things to the extent that they will help him attain his end.”¹⁵ Everything a student learns and everything he accomplishes with his learning, whether it be in the classroom, on the field, in the gym, or on the stage exists for the higher purpose of praising and serving God.

The second of these core values is called *Magis*. This means “to strive to do more in sharing the Gospel values, learning, and serving.”¹⁶ In letter written by Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. in his capacity as Superior General of the Society of Jesus, he states, “The objective of Jesuit education is to assist in the fullest possible development of all of the God-given talents of each individual person as a member of the human community.”¹⁷ In everything a student does at Belen Jesuit, whether it is in the classroom, on the field, in the gym, or on the stage, they strive for greatness and give their maximum effort.

The third and final core value listed in our *Faculty Manual* is called *Cura Personalis* or Care for the Whole Person.¹⁸ On this Kolvenbach writes,

The young men and women who are students in a Jesuit school have not reached full maturity; the educational process recognizes the development stages of intellectual, affective, and spiritual growth and assists each student to mature gradually in these areas. Thus, the curriculum is centered on the person rather than on the material to be covered. Each student is allowed to develop and to accomplish objectives at a pace suited to individual ability and the characteristics of his or her own spirituality.¹⁹

¹⁵ Ignatius of Loyola *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. trans. Anthony Mottola (New York: Image Books, 1989), 47.

¹⁶ *Faculty Manual*, 6.

¹⁷ Kolvenbach, *Go Forth and Teach*, 17-18.

¹⁸ *Faculty Manual*, 6.

¹⁹ Kolvenbach, *Go Forth and Teach*, 21.

Besides the core values particular to Belen Jesuit, we theology teachers promote other ideals of Ignatian spirituality such as “finding God in all things” and being “world-affirming.”

“Finding God in all things” is the hallmark of Ignatian spirituality and what all of the core values stem from. This is because “Ignatius learned from his own experience that God, the holy Mystery who is three in one, not only wants a personal relationship with each person both as an individual and as a community, but also *acts in this world* to bring about such a relationship.”²⁰ Belen Jesuit wants its faculty and students to encounter God in every place and in every act. God is not only found in the obvious places like the chapel during Mass or in the confessional or in theology class. God is found in all subjects, in the gym, on the field, and on the stage.

This leads to a “world-affirming” perspective. Kolvenbach describes how Ignatius was world-affirming.

For Ignatius, to know the world better is to know God better. There can be no contradiction between human knowledge and faith. At most, there can only be a failure in understanding. Ignatius’ sense of the goodness and beauty of all things also leads a person to be a responsible steward of creation.²¹

Belen Jesuit believes that teaching our students about the world is teaching them about God; the two are inseparable. If we fail to teach them properly about God, then their knowledge of the world will be lacking. If we fail to teach them properly about the world,

²⁰ William A. Barry, *Finding God in All Things: A Companion to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Notre Dame, IN.: Ave Maria Press, 1991), 14.

²¹ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., "Themes of Jesuit Higher Education" (lecture, Address given to Georgetown University and Georgetown Prep, Georgetown University, Washington D.C, May 22, 2000), accessed October 2, 2017, <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/Heartland3/r-themes.html>.

then their knowledge of God will be lacking. As a result, “Jesuit education affirms the radical goodness of the world, tries to create a sense of wonder and mystery in learning about God’s creation, probes the meaning of human life and is concerned with the total formation of each student as an individual personally loved by God.”²² Hence, if “one of the most emblematic concepts of Ignatian spirituality [is] ‘finding God in all things,’”²³ then all departments of Belen Jesuit must engage in the task of informing every student about Jesuit spirituality and worldview. Core to Belen Jesuit is the belief that “Faith is developed and justice is promoted through the examples set by *everyone* in the school community.”²⁴ Engaging in pedagogy informed by Jesuit values in this pervasive manner is what will make the education provided at Belen Jesuit truly “world-affirming.”

MY MINISTERIAL STORY

My current ministry is teaching as a member of the theology department at Belen Jesuit. I am one of fifteen department faculty who teach Scripture, Liturgy, Sacramental Theology, Christology, Catholic Social Teaching, and Ignatian Spirituality to students from sixth grade to twelfth grade. Currently, I am to execute the curriculum of the sixth grade which consists mostly of an overview of basic Catholic belief, the Old Testament, and the Liturgical Year. I teach five sections that amount to approximately 125 students.

²² *Faculty Manual*, 8.

²³ Catherine Mooney, “Ignatian Spirituality, A Spirituality of Mission,” *Mission Studies* 26 (2009): 205.

²⁴ Mooney, “Ignatian Spirituality,” 205, emphasis added.

There are some challenges that exist for my colleagues and me at Belen Jesuit. Our students come from various educational backgrounds and levels of faith instruction. Some have been educated in Catholic schools since pre-K. Others have been educated in their Catholic faith through their parish's religious education program (CCD). Still others have had no personal or academic exposure to the Catholic faith at all. In my experience, most of my students do not come from families that one would call "practicing." Therefore, there is quite a mix of faith backgrounds to deal with, which means that a sixth-grade theology teacher is best off starting with the basics.

My ministerial question concerns to what extent teachers across disciplines employ a pedagogy informed by Jesuit values to make the educational experience of their students truly "world-affirming," By this, I mean to describe an educational experience that "affirms the radical goodness of the world, tries to create a sense of wonder and mystery in learning about God's creation, probes the meaning of human life and is concerned with the total formation of each student as an individual personally loved by God."²⁵ The ministerial issues brought up by this question include:

- To what extent is the educational experience of the students at Belen Jesuit truly "world-affirming?"
- To what extent are the teachers aware of the Jesuit world-view in which Belen Jesuit Preparatory School operates?
- To what extent does the school communicate this world-view to its teachers and students?
- To what extent does the school assist its teachers in communicating this world-view to their students?
- To what extent do teachers find pedagogy informed by Jesuit values relevant to their subject area?

²⁵ *Faculty Manual*, 8.

Furthermore, in the *Faculty Handbook* of Belen Jesuit Preparatory School, in the section entitled “Principles of Jesuit Education,” it states, “Jesuit schools are part of the apostolic mission of the church in building the Kingdom of God... The aim of Jesuit education is the formation of principled, value-oriented persons for others after the example of Jesus Christ. Teaching in a Jesuit school, therefore, is a ministry.”²⁶ It then follows that the practices of teachers in a Jesuit school are related to ministry.

INITIAL CLAIMS AND INTUITIONS

Based on my observations of the operation of Belen Jesuit and my overall ministerial experience as a teacher of theology for more than thirteen years, my initial claims are as follows:

- The pedagogy of Jesuit education includes a religious dimension that is required to permeate the entire educational experience. In other words, all classes taught at a Catholic, Jesuit school are expected to have a religious foundation which is world-affirming.
- Therefore, a Jesuit institution, like Belen Jesuit, will acknowledge that the act of teaching is a world-affirming ministry.
- It is possible for any teacher teaching any subject to demonstrate to their students that God is present and working in creation, in history, and in persons and thereby provide a world-affirming experience in her/his classroom.
- Belen Jesuit is striving to provide a world-affirming education to its students.

²⁶ Ibid., 9.

- Not all teachers in all subjects see their subject as amenable to a world-affirming pedagogy informed by Jesuit values.
- Not all teachers in all subjects see their work as a world-affirming ministry as it is described by the Principles of Jesuit Education.

METHOD

The practical theological method that I will employ is that of Thomas Groome's "shared praxis." Thomas Groome's method is most appropriate for this topic since his method operates within the scope of religious education and does so through five distinct but interrelated movements that establish a basic praxis-theory-praxis model.

Groome's first two movements address the first praxis. Movement one invites the participants to name the activity that is going to be the subject of discussion. In this case, the activity being discussed will be providing a world-affirming education in a school operated within the Jesuit context. Movement two requires participants to reflect on what they do and to ask critical questions. The purpose of this movement is to give each participant the opportunity to evaluate their personal effort in this activity. Those engaged in educating sixth through twelfth graders in the setting of a school shaped by Jesuit values will evaluate to what extent their pedagogy is "world-affirming."

The third and fourth movements address theory. Groome's third movement involves the investigator's retelling the story of the community in which the first praxis is taking place. The faith responses the community has made in the past are then examined. In this case, I will present the Jesuit pedagogy of world-affirming education and examine

the faith responses that the Jesuits have made in their schools to ensure that this pedagogy is being implemented. Simply put, I will examine what the Jesuits have done in making their education world-affirming and why they did it. This movement will specifically focus on what Belen Jesuit has done with its faculty to implement world-affirming education among its students.

The fourth movement involves the participants taking ownership of the story of the community and internalizing it. It is important that the participants understand that the activity they engage in is in the context of a community. The participants must create a dialogue between the story of the community and their personal story of ministry. In my thesis-project, this movement will evaluate the extent to which world-affirming education is being implemented. I will ask the participants to reflect on the *Principles of Jesuit Education* and see how well they are commensurate with their own personal ministries. In addition, I will ask them to give examples of how they have responded to these principles in the past regarding producing a world-affirming education for their students.

The fifth movement of Groome's method addresses the second praxis. Participants are now able to choose what their faith response will be to the dialogue between the story of the community and their personal story of ministry. This is the opportunity to map out future practices or make resolutions for better practices. I will be drawing general conclusions about to what extent the personal ministries of the faculty and administration of Belen Jesuit Preparatory School provide a world-affirming education. Once that assessment is made, I will then propose new practices that will either enable the faculty and administration of Belen Jesuit to actively engage in world-

affirming education and utilize the commensurate pedagogy or, if it is found that they are already actively doing so, to point out ways in which we may improve in this respect.

For the purposes of gathering data, I will use both qualitative and quantitative methods. I will ask the administrators, faculty, and recent alumni to fill out surveys using *SurveyMonkey*. This quantitative research will help to establish or refute my initial claims by seeing how many administrators and faculty either agree or disagree with those claims and to what extent they agree or disagree. The data collected from the recent alumni will serve to corroborate or call into question the data collected from the administrators and faculty.

My qualitative research will take the form of interviewing select members of the administration and faculty regarding the ministerial concerns I have expressed concerning the world-affirming education we are called to provide. Those who will be included in this process are the president, executive director of alumni relations, principal, assistant principals, and department chairs. I believe this range of individuals will demonstrate the progression of how Belen Jesuit has handled the call to provide world-affirming education and expose its successes and failures in this regard.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The sources that I will describe in my literature review will be divided into five topic categories: 1) Belen Jesuit Documents 2) Jesuit Spirituality and Worldview, 3) Jesuit educational pedagogy, 4) Sacramentality, and 5) Teaching as a Ministry and Sacramental Act.

Since my ministerial situation is within Belen Jesuit Preparatory School, the documents that Belen Jesuit provides as guidelines for its mission and pedagogy will be of the utmost importance in my research. The *Faculty Manual* presents detailed information regarding who Belen Jesuit is as a Catholic, Jesuit preparatory school including:

- The Mission
- Core Purpose
- Core Values
- Philosophy and Goals
- An Overview of the Principles of Jesuit Education
- “The Profile of the Grad at Grad.”²⁷

Within the *Faculty Manual*, Belen Jesuit demonstrates how its mission, core values, and philosophy are rooted in Jesuit spirituality by including a section called “Principles of Jesuit Education.”²⁸ The manual states that this section is based on a document written by the Superior General of the Jesuits Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. in 1986 entitled *Go Forth and Teach: The Characteristics of Jesuit Education*. The manual highlights several paragraphs within the letter expressing what Belen Jesuit emphasizes with its students in order to make each of them a “well-rounded person who is intellectually competent, open to growth, religious, loving, and committed to doing justice in generous service to the people of God.”²⁹ The first statement that this document makes about Jesuit education is that it is “world-affirming,”³⁰ and the first principle quoted in the *Faculty Manual* is about

²⁷ *Faculty Manual*, 6-16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Kolvenbach, *Go Forth and Teach*, 17.

God: “Jesuit education affirms the radical goodness of the world, tries to create a sense of wonder and mystery about God’s creation, probes the meaning of human life and is concerned with the total formation of each student as an individual personally loved by God.”³¹ The term “radical goodness of the world”³² is taken directly from the document’s explanation of world-affirming.

I will employ other sources to aid in my description of Jesuit educational pedagogy. Specifically, i will use an article by Barbara J. Fleischer entitled, “The Ignatian Vision for Higher Education: Practical Theology.”³³ She attempts to connect Ignatius’ vision of education with the modern tenants of practical theology. She states,

Education was a means for the Jesuits of giving greater glory to God and of working concretely toward the more universal good in society. Significantly, because of their world-affirming assertion that God is to be found in all things, Ignatius and the first Jesuits embraced the cultural movement of Renaissance humanism as a partner in shaping the direction of school institutions and curricula.³⁴

A further resource is *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality for Real Life* by Fr. James Martin, S.J. It is considered a useful resource for someone who has never taught in a Jesuit school in order for that person to become familiar with Jesuit spirituality which is the basis of Belen Jesuit’s school mission. Martin has taken centuries of theology, tradition, and pedagogy and addressed all of it in a concise, easily understood manual. He has also made Jesuit spirituality very relatable by the use of

³¹ *Faculty Manual*, 8.

³² Kolvenbach, *Go Forth and Teach*, 17.

³³ Barbara Fleischer, “The Ignatian Vision for Higher Education: Practical Theology,” *Religious Education* 88, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 255-272.

³⁴ Fleischer, “The Ignatian Vision for Higher Education, 267

personal anecdotes and witness stories. This source has proven to be extremely useful not just as a citable source but also as a reference that clarifies other references to Jesuit spirituality.

To more specifically connect Jesuit spirituality and the ministry of education I will be using Catherine M. Mooney's article, "Ignatian Spirituality, A Spirituality for Mission."³⁵ Here she has devoted a section to the ministry of education. Interestingly, Mooney tells us that "[t]he Jesuits' entrance into the business of running schools...happened rather spontaneously, without any plan to become a teaching order, the ministry for which they would soon become famous."³⁶ Primarily, the mission envisioned for the Jesuit by Ignatius himself boiled down to the simple idea of helping others. In the decades that followed their founding the Jesuits discovered that by devoting themselves to the teaching ministry, they could accomplish this in a more far-reaching way. Mooney writes, "Far from taking Jesuits away from their early ministries of helping others, the colleges functioned as effective hubs for them and promised to cultivate Christians who would, in their turn, also help others."³⁷

All of the sources I have mentioned thus far, refer back to *The Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Belen Jesuit claims that its mission and core values are taken directly from *The Spiritual Exercises*. *The Spiritual Exercises* have been translated by many authors over the centuries, but I decided upon Anthony Mottola's translation

³⁵ Mooney, "Ignatian Spirituality," 192-213.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 199.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 200.

because of the introduction provided by Fr. Robert W. Gleason, S.J.³⁸ Gleason's introduction not only provides a good summary of the exercises, but also the history behind the founding of the Society of Jesus, including the life of Ignatius. Several other sources will be called upon to offer insight into *The Spiritual Exercises* and their application as well as Jesuit spirituality in general.

To gain a larger perspective on ministerial nature of teaching and the nature of Christian religious education in general, I will be using Thomas Groome's *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry*. This is relevant because the *Faculty Manual* declares that teaching is a ministry. To those engaged in the teaching ministry, Groome poses the question, "Do you have an active awareness of your day-to-day efforts in this school as aimed explicitly at an ultimately religious goal?"³⁹ He states,

Education that is intentionally 'religious' is clearly a transcendent activity... In other words, it encourages people to interpret their lives, relate to others, and engage in the world in ways that faithfully reflect what they perceive as ultimate in life, that is, from a faith perspective... But by nature, Christian faith education shares with all religious education this transcendent dimension.⁴⁰

Groome would assert that the efforts of a teacher in a setting such as Belen Jesuit are clearly aimed at religious goals.

In addition to its having a religious goal, Groome also describes education as being political in nature. In this, he views education not only as something which conveys

³⁸ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*.

³⁹ *Faculty Manual*, 22.

⁴⁰ Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry*. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 11.

facts, but also as something that causes movement in the lives of those who are being educated. The simple conveyance of facts is neutral and objective. Groome argues that education cannot be this way. He uses the notion of education discussed by Plato and Aristotle who believed that education “serves to maintain the state.”⁴¹ Groome also incorporates the notion of education used by Paolo Friere as “enabling people to deal critically and creatively with their social reality, rather than simply fitting them into it.”⁴² In either perspective, education encourages students to analyze what is going on in the world. In Jesuit education, students are trained to analyze the world as it is through the faith perspective they have been provided.

A path toward world-affirming education in the Jesuit context presumes the sacramentality of the world. With this in mind, I will employ sources that establish the definition and application of sacramentality within the context of education. To provide a firm foundation as to the meaning and application of sacramentality and in particular the sacramentality of the world, I will use Michael Himes’ article, “Finding God in all Things: A Sacramental Worldview and its Effects.” Himes speaks of a “sacramental principle” that makes Catholicism unique from other Christian traditions. He defines it in this way: “What is always and everywhere true must be brought to our attention and be embraced in some concrete experience at some particular time and place.”⁴³ His reference

⁴¹ Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 15.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Michael Himes, “Finding God in All Things: A Sacramental Worldview and Its Effects,” in *As Leaven in the World*, edited by Thomas Landry, 91-113 (New York: Sheed & Ward, 2001).

to “what is always and everywhere true” references God’s gracious and revelatory presence.

In another article entitled, “Living Conversion,” Himes speaks specifically about the sacramentality of education. He even goes so far as to say that any discipline that is taught is done so through the principle of sacramentality. “I am suggesting that the Catholic sacramental principle supports this with the conviction that what is there to be seen in its depth is grace. Consequently, to teach any discipline or field is a holy activity. All teaching can produce sacramental beholders, even when teachers do not know that this is what they are doing.”⁴⁴ In support of Himes’ notion of sacramentality as a theological principle, I will be using an article entitled “Catholics: A Sacramental People,” by John Baldovin, S.J.⁴⁵ He states, “Moreover, a number of 20th-century Catholic theologians (especially Karl Rahner, S.J. and Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P.) helped us recover the idea that in a fundamental way Christ is THE sacrament of God and that the Church is the primary sacrament of Christ in the world.”⁴⁶

Thomas Groome also has something to say about the importance of sacramentality in Catholic theology. He further develops St. Augustine’s idea that a sacrament is “a visible sign of invisible grace.” In “What Makes Us Catholic: The Sacramental Principle,” Groome asserts that this definition is not bound to the seven liturgical sacraments and, therefore, contends that there are many other things in the world that theologically can be viewed as sacraments. “The sacramental principle

⁴⁴ Michael Himes, “Living Conversion,” *Conversations on Higher Jesuit Education* (Fall 1995) 8.

⁴⁵ John Baldovin, S.J., “Catholics: A Sacramental People,” *C21 Resources* (Spring 2012): 2-3.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

proposes that everything in our life/world can be such a sign. In the classic phrase of Ignatius of Loyola, Christians are invited to ‘see God in all things.’ Christian faith also claims that God’s saving work in Jesus has heightened the sacramentality of life.”⁴⁷

While Michael Himes will provide the theoretical background of the notion of sacramentality in my research, I will be turning to Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore for the practical application of sacramentality to education. I will make use of her work *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*. Mullino Moore describes educating as an “engagement with God and God’s creation.”⁴⁸ She goes on to say that “[t]eaching needs to be re-envisioned as sacred teaching – mediating the Holy.”⁴⁹ Education is sacramental when it mediates God in a way similar to the way the liturgical sacraments do. The world, like these outward sacramental symbols, mediate God’s presence and action in a concrete way within the lives of believers. In the classrooms at Belen Jesuit, each teacher and what he/she teaches has the capacity to mediate some part of creation and therefore to reveal something unique about God. They have the opportunity to demonstrate God’s presence and action in concrete ways in creation through their subject matter and pedagogy. For this reason, every class our students take has the capacity to be sacramental in nature and thus world-affirming.

⁴⁷ Groome, “What Makes Us Catholic,” 4.

⁴⁸ Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*. (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004), 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

CONCLUSION

Providing a world-affirming education is one of the core Principles of Jesuit Education. As a Jesuit school, Belen Jesuit was founded upon these principles and seeks to put them into action. Belen Jesuit has a long and storied history in which it has received a reputation of academic excellence. As a researcher, I am interested in discovering to what extent the Jesuit principle of world-affirming education is put into practice at Belen Jesuit today and if there exists the need and/or the desire for the school to improve on the application of this principle. The next chapter, therefore, reviews the Jesuit philosophy of education, which has existed since the time of Ignatius of Loyola himself, in order to gain the proper context for the topic of this research. Seeing how these principles have been and continue to be applied in Jesuit schools can provide a baseline to see where Belen Jesuit stands in providing a world-affirming education for its students.

CHAPTER 2

Jesuit Spirituality and Educational Pedagogy: What Did the Data Reveal?

When I interviewed to become a teacher at Belen Jesuit, it was a three-step process. I first met the chairperson for the theology department. Having made a favorable impression, I then met with the principal. The final leg of the journey was a meeting with the president of Belen Jesuit. In this meeting the mission of Belen Jesuit was explained to me as well as the vision of the president who had just assumed that position six months earlier.

I was told that Belen Jesuit needs to be “unabashedly Catholic and unabashedly Jesuit.” The president spoke of a new charter school that was going to be built less than a mile away that would serve the same age group (6th to 12th Grades) as Belen Jesuit. He said that he was not concerned about that new school drawing some of our current or potential students away because Belen Jesuit has something that this new school could never have: a Catholic, Jesuit identity.

In this chapter the Catholic, Jesuit identity of Belen Jesuit is explored. First I will examine of the overall vision of Jesuit education and how it is put into practice in Jesuit schools. Following this I will analyze of the Characteristics of Jesuit Education, which include providing a “world-affirming education.” Finally, I will review of the data gathered from the surveys of the faculty, administration, and recent alumni, and the interviews with key administrators and faculty members.

IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA AND THE FIRST JESUITS ON EDUCATION

In the life of St. Ignatius of Loyola, “The courtier and soldier became the pilgrim and student; the pilgrim and student became priest and apostle; the priest and apostle became the creator of a renowned religious family.”¹ Ignatius believed in the supreme presence of God within the universe which is made manifest in the human experience. God wills to be made known in the every-day occurrences of human life. Ignatius believed this to be God “laboring for us.”²

John O’Malley describes two basic impulses that defined the course of the newly founded Society of Jesus. The first of the two was missionary work. It was the original intent of the first ten members of the Society to be missionaries in the Holy Land. When they realized that it wasn’t possible to act on that intention, they were resolved to “travel anywhere in the world where there was hope of God’s greater service and the good of souls.”³ The other impulse he describes comes directly from the *Spiritual Exercises*. He calls it “interiority,” internalizing one’s experiences and accepting them as “God’s action in one’s life through cultivation of prayer and reception of personalized forms of guidance.”⁴

Ignatius wanted his disciples to learn from his own experience of interiority, and from this desire he wrote the *Spiritual Exercises*. The first Jesuits, in turn, wanted to

¹ William V. Bangert, *A History of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources), 45.

² Kolvenbach, S.J., 17.

³ *Ibid*, 47.

⁴ *Ibid*.

spread this practice to the people to whom they ministered. At first, it took the form of teaching simple catechism to both adults and children. From there it evolved into something deeper and more formal. Moreover, Ignatius “evolved in his own life from being a hermit to being reconciled with the world.” As the years passed, “he also evolved into a believer in social institutions as especially powerful means for ‘the help of souls.’”⁵ O’Malley believes there is a direct correlation between this evolution within the personal spiritual journey of Ignatius and the evolution of the educational charism of the Jesuits.

Howard Gray, S.J. also suggests that Jesuit education grew out of the experiences of Ignatius himself. Ignatius’ eleven years of formal education were the setting of the story of his conversion. These years were integral in the formation of the Society of Jesus, since Ignatius met those who would become his original Jesuit companions during his studies at the University of Paris.

Ignatius saw God as his teacher and his experience as a pupil as revelatory of God. In a dictated memoir Ignatius says,

During this period, God was dealing with him in the same way a schoolteacher deals with a child while instructing him. This was because either he was thick and dull of brain, or because of the firm will that God Himself had implanted in him to serve Him – but clearly recognized and had always recognized that it was in this way that God dealt with him. Furthermore, if he were to doubt this, he would think he was offending the Divine Majesty.⁶

⁵ Ibid, 48.

⁶ Ignatius of Loyola, *A Pilgrim’s Journey, The Autobiography of Ignatius Loyola*, trans. Joseph N. Tylenda, S.J. (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1985), 35-36, no. 27.

The way in which Ignatius reflected on and interpreted his own educational experience is what inevitably led to the Principles of Jesuit Education. Gray claims that Ignatius' conversion was, among other things, "an intellectual reorientation, a way of viewing God as inspiration and the world as a source of knowledge."⁷ Ignatius saw his learning as not only revealing of "the things of God, but of God Himself."⁸

Education, therefore, is a means by which the human experience of God can be brought into focus so that the educated will see God and God's labor within their own experiences. For the Jesuits, education was also a labor of Christ. As a result, "All teaching is profoundly revelatory, it is the celebration of God present to creation, and it leads ultimately to the glory of God. For Jesuit teachers, teaching as the imitation of Christ could hardly have a clearer warrant."⁹ The idea of a "Jesuit school," therefore, was not the product of a long and gradual development of the mission of the Society of Jesus. Indeed, though Ignatius founded his order to be missionaries, from the very beginning, education was seen as a means to put the missionary charism of the Society of Jesus into practice. Just eight years after the Society of Jesus received its final approval by Pope Paul III, ten of its members founded the first "Jesuit school" in Messina. That one school paved the way for many more to be founded within a very short time. According to O'Malley, "Within a few years the Jesuits had opened some thirty primary/secondary

⁷ Howard J. Gray, S.J., "The Experience of Ignatius Loyola: Background to Jesuit Education," in *A Jesuit Education Reader: Contemporary Writings on the Jesuit Mission in Education, Principles, the Issue of Catholic Identity, Practical Applications of the Ignatian Way, and More*, ed. George W. Traub, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 65.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Timothy S. Healy, S.J., "Ignatius and the Jesuit Vocation," in *The Labor of God: An Ignatian View of Church and Culture*, ed. William J. O'Brien (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991), 11.

schools, but also the so-called Roman College, which would soon develop into the first real Jesuit university (Gregorian University).”¹⁰

A BRIEF HISTORY OF JESUIT EDUCATION

It has been demonstrated that the educational charism of the Jesuits existed from the founding years of the order. The time of founding of the Jesuit Order coincides with the time of Protestant Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. Because of this, the two are historically linked. The Jesuits are seen as one of more powerful contributors to the Counter-Reformation, particularly because of their efforts in education. Catholic education at the time was reserved for the elite who could afford it or for prospective clergy. The Jesuits offered avenues for common people, who may or may not have interest in pursuing the priesthood, to have access to Catholic education by creating tuition-free institutions. Despite the timing of their founding, the Jesuit charism for education did not advance solely for the purposes of apologetics. It became a happy consequence of its missionary charism. The Jesuits founded schools wherever their missionary work took them, including Asia and the Americas where the native populations were not concerned about the spread of Protestantism.

John O’Malley indicates that prior to the founding of Jesuit educational institutions, the only formal education available was that of the great universities. Their

¹⁰ John W. O’Malley, S.J., “How the First Jesuits Became Involved in Education,” in *A Jesuit Education Reader: Contemporary Writings on the Jesuit Mission in Education, Principles, the Issue of Catholic Identity, Practical Applications of the Ignatian Way, and More*, ed. George W. Traub, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 43.

curriculum was based mostly in the studies of philosophy (which included all the sciences) and theology with some universities offering professional studies in fields like medicine and law.¹¹ While the Jesuits would go on to found many such institutions, their initial foray into education was part of something quite unique. The first school they founded in Messina was an offshoot of new type of school: a school for children. The idea of these schools had existed for less than a century before the founding of the Jesuits. These schools were the products of the Italian Renaissance and focused more on the *studia humanitatis*, i.e., “poetry, drama, oratory, and history...” and would conclude in the student’s late teens.¹² It was the intention of these schools to not only be institutions of learning but also of human formation. “They would, if properly taught, render the student a better human being, imbued especially with an ideal of service to the common good, in imitation of the great heroes of antiquity-an ideal certainly befitting the Christian.”¹³ This is not only “befitting the Christian,” but also the Jesuit ideal of being “men for others,” which is Belen Jesuit’s motto.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Jesuit foray into education was the publication of the *Ratio Studiorum* (Plan of Studies) in 1599. This document provided and centralized the rationale, administration, and curriculum of Jesuit schools. This date of this publication again demonstrates that education was part of the Jesuit charism from the earliest days of the order. In this document, the curriculum of university study is known as the “high studies” and that of the secondary schools is known as the “lower

¹¹ O’Malley, “How the First Jesuit Became Involved in Education,” 45.

¹² Ibid, 46.

¹³ Ibid., 46.

studies.” Within the “Rules of the Prefect of Lower Studies,” it states “He (the Jesuit instructor) should be aware that he has been chosen to help the rector in every way possible in directing and administering our schools to the end that our students may advance in uprightness of life as well as in the liberal arts.”¹⁴

For the Jesuit founder, it was a Dominican theologian and philosopher that seemed to be the most appropriate model for the Jesuit mantra, “Finding God in All Things.” According to O’Malley,

While at university, he [Ignatius]... studied the theology of Aquinas... Thomas was the most positive in his appreciation of this world – intent... on reconciling human culture and religion, so that they are appreciated not in competition with each other but in cooperation, both coming from God and leading to God.¹⁵

It was in Thomas Aquinas that Ignatius found support for the concept of “world-affirming” education. A devotion to Aquinas’ teaching resonates in the *Ratio Studiorum* where it says in the “Rules of the Professor of Scholastic Theology,”

Members of our Society shall expressly follow the teaching of St. Thomas in scholastic theology. They shall consider him their own teacher and should make every effort to have their students hold him in the highest possible esteem.¹⁶

Jesuit education may have begun as a way of answering the challenges to the Catholic faith posed by the spread of Protestantism, but it evolved into something much greater and much more universal. Pedro Ribadeneira wrote a letter to King Phillip II of Spain in which he stated “*institutio puerorum, reformatio mundi*” – “the proper education of youth

¹⁴ *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum of 1599*. Translated by Allan P. Farrell, S.J. (Washington D.C.: Conference of Major Superiors of Jesuits, 1970), 46.

¹⁵ O’Malley, “How the First Jesuit Became Involved in Education,” 49.

¹⁶ *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum of 1599*, 33.

will mean improvement for the whole world.”¹⁷ Education was undertaken by the Jesuits for the simple purpose of making the world better by making people better.

THE PRINCIPLES OF JESUIT EDUCATION

In 1980, the Jesuits felt it was necessary to reevaluate their secondary education institutions. To that end, a meeting was held in Rome comprised of an international group of Jesuits and lay people to answer questions that had been raised about the overall effectiveness of Jesuit secondary education. The meeting agreed to establish the International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education (ICAJE). That commission opened its first meeting in 1982, and over the next four years, developed “The Characteristics of Jesuit Education.” The introduction to the document states its purpose:

The description that follows is for Jesuits, lay people, and other Religious working in Jesuit schools; it is for *teachers, administrators, parents, and governing boards* in these schools. All are invited to join together in making the Ignatian tradition, adapted to the present day, more effectively present in the policies and practices that determine the life of the school.¹⁸

It is clear that the ICAJE intends for these characteristics to play an important role in the formation of the mission, policies, and administration of all Jesuit schools.

¹⁷ See John W. O’Malley, “Early Jesuit Spirituality: Spain and Italy,” in *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern*, ed. Louis Dupré and Don E. Saliers, vol. 18, *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 3-27.

¹⁸ Kolvenbach, *Go Forth and Teach*, 14, emphasis in the original.

The document lists twenty-eight (28) distinctive characteristics that are to comprise a Jesuit school, while acknowledging that “Not all of the characteristics of Jesuit education will be present in the same measure in each individual school; in some situations a statement may represent an ideal rather than a present reality.”¹⁹ Based on the order of presentation, paramount importance is placed on the idea of Jesuit schools providing world-affirming education since “world-affirming” is the first characteristic listed in the document.

The Faculty Manual at Belen Jesuit takes the “The Characteristics of Jesuit Education” and derives from them ten “Principles of Jesuit Education.” The first of these principles is “God,” and in the description of this principle, the manual quotes the ICAJE document’s description of world-affirming education when it states,

Jesuit education affirms the radical goodness of the world, tries to create a sense of wonder and mystery in learning about God’s creation, probes the meaning of human life and is concerned with the total formation of each student as an individual personally loved by God.²⁰

In order for a Jesuit school like Belen Jesuit to achieve this first characteristic, certain ideals must be in place.

First is the idea that the act of teaching students is a ministerial act by nature. In the wake of the Second Vatican Council, the idea of ministry has taken on a different shape. The term “ministry” had usually been exclusively associated with a “minister,” and, in particular, an ordained minister. Edward Hahnenberg observes, “The men of the hierarchy become the sacred ministers, while the laity serve Christ in the world- not

¹⁹ Ibid, 16.

²⁰ Ibid, 17.

passive, but somewhat secondary.”²¹ This paradigm was to be supplanted by a communal approach to ministry in which the Church promotes one mission which is accomplished by various ministries exercised by various members. Yves Congar wrote,

It would then be necessary to substitute for the linear scheme a scheme where the community appears as the enveloping reality within which the ministries... are placed as modes of service of what the community is called to be and do.²²

By “linear scheme”, Congar is referring to the hierarchal conception of the Church. The Jesuit school can be seen to abide by the model proposed by Congar. The Jesuits provide the mission of the school, but there are several ministries at work within the institution to make the mission a reality. The teachers of the school undertake one of the ministries that assist in the accomplishment of the school’s Jesuit mission.

The second ideal that must be in place in order for a Jesuit school to provide a world-affirming education comes from the third Characteristic of Jesuit Education: “Jesuit Education includes a religious dimension that permeates the entire education.”²³ While one of the hallmarks of Jesuit education is dialogue with secular culture, that dialogue must proceed from a religious center.

The ultimate purpose of education for Ignatius was a personal encounter with God that would lead students to discernment and collaboration with Christ in building the reign of God... It was value-centered because its aim was to lead students to use all their knowledge ‘for the greater glory of God.’²⁴

²¹ Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Ministries: A Relational Approach*. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 26

²² Yves Congar, “My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries,” *The Jurist* 32 (1972): 176 (emphasis in original)

²³ Kolvenbach, *Go Forth and Teach*, 19.

²⁴ Fleischer, “The Ignatian Vision for High Education: Practical Theology, 268.

It would be difficult for students to have personal encounters with God if their education experience did not come from a religious dimension.

THE APPLICATION OF JESUIT SPIRITUALITY AND EDUCATIONAL PEDAGOGY IN JESUIT SCHOOLS

The teachers at Belen often joke that the institution seeks to make its male students “G.I.R.L.S.” This was a play on words because what they are alluding to are the goals that Jesuit schools in the United States set for their students as they graduate from high school. “G.I.R.L.S.” stands for “open to GROWTH, INTELLECTUALLY competent, RELIGIOUS, LOVING, and committed to SOCIAL justice. The acronym may have been a bit of a stretch, but nevertheless, effective.

A graduate from a Jesuit school who is “open to growth” has demonstrated that she/he has matured as a person in all facets and “reflects some intentional responsibility for one’s own growth.”²⁵ Graduates understand that no matter how much they have grown and matured during their educational career at a Jesuit high school, there is still more growth and maturity that has to take place. Not only do they understand that, but they take the initiative in making that growth and maturity happen.

By “intellectually competent” it is understood that graduates not only have retained the information and skills they have been taught, but also have mastered the material. This mastery has prepared them for the upcoming stages of their educational

²⁵ Jesuit Schools Network, “Profile of the Graduate at Graduation.” JesuitSchoolsNetwork.org. <https://jesuitschoolsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Profile-of-the-Graduate-at-Graduation-2010-Revised-8.14.2015.pdf> (accessed June 21, 2018).

careers and has also produced in them “habits of intellectual inquiry, as well as a disposition towards life-long learning.”²⁶ This intellectual curiosity will hopefully advance the graduate’s quest for truth and their response to social issues.

A graduate of a Jesuit high school is expected to be “religious.” By this it is understood that the graduate has a working knowledge of the teachings and practices of the Catholic faith. It is understood that not every graduate of a Jesuit high school will be Catholic. It is also understood that not every Catholic graduate is in a family that necessarily prioritizes religious faith. With that said, it is expected that with their background in Ignatian spirituality, the graduate would have “examined his or her own religious feelings and belief with a view to choosing a fundamental orientation toward God and establishing a relationship with a religious tradition and/or community.”²⁷

The next element of the profile, “loving,” emphasizes the idea of building and fostering relationships with God and neighbor and placing those relationships in a primary position of importance.

The graduate is beginning to be able to risk some deeper levels of relationship in which one can disclose self and accept the mystery of another person and cherish that person. Nonetheless, the graduate’s attempt at loving, while clearly beyond childhood, may not yet reflect the confidence and freedom of an adult.²⁸

The graduate understands that this comes with risk, but it is ultimately necessary in the process of growing and maturing.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Jesuit Schools Network. “Profile of the Graduate at Graduation.”

The final element of the profile seems to bring the previous four together. When a person is open to growth, intellectually competent, religious, and loving, they are prepared to be committed to social justice. Belen Jesuit's motto, "Men for Others," sees its completion in this element of the profile. Being a woman or man for others goes beyond just loving the other. It means becoming an activist; standing up for those who have no voice, no means of defense. Just as there is risk in loving the other, the graduate looks beyond the personal cost of coming to the aid of others and prioritizes that aid. They seek to encounter Christ in the way Christ demanded – "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."²⁹ "The graduate has been inspired to develop the awareness and skills necessary to live in a global society as a person for and with others."³⁰

The Jesuit Schools Network (JSN), formerly the Jesuit Secondary Education Association (JSEA), produced its revised "Profile of the Graduate at Graduation" in 2010 with the five goals referenced above. These goals were part of an original profile produced in 1980, but the JSN felt they needed updating in light of three documents that had been produced since then: *Go Forth and Teach: The Characteristics of Jesuit Education*; "Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach;" and "What Makes a Jesuit School Jesuit."

There are 28 Jesuit high schools in the continental United States. In a random search of ten of these schools located in ten different states, every one of them had the

²⁹ Matt 25:35-36.

³⁰ Jesuit Schools Network. "Profile of the Graduate at Graduation."

JSN's "Profile of the Graduate at Graduate" accessible in a prominent place. It could be found either at the beginning of the parent-student handbook or through a link on the school website's homepage. These Jesuit schools are dedicated to promoting their Jesuit identity. They want to appear "unabashedly Jesuit." Now the focus will turn to Belen Jesuit and to what extent it is "unabashedly Jesuit" in its efforts to provide its students world-affirming education.

SURVEY OF THE ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY, AND COUNSELORS

Results

The focus of this research is the first characteristic of Jesuit education: that this education is world-affirming. In order to produce evidence of the extent that education received by students at Belen Jesuit is indeed world-affirming, one electronic survey was sent to the administration, faculty, and counselors and another to alumni of the five most recent graduating classes. Each of the surveys was comprised of ten statements that dealt with world-affirming education, seeing teaching as a ministry, the religious dimension of Catholic, Jesuit education, the mission statement of Belen Jesuit, and the idea of teaching as a sacramental act. The respondents were invited to choose whether they strongly agreed, agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with each statement. They were provided with a comment box if they choose to expound on their answer. They were also given an index of terms so that they understood what I meant by world-affirming, religious dimension, the mission statement of Belen Jesuit, and sacramental.

The results below summarize the responses of the administration, faculty, and counselors. One hundred fifty-five (155) people were invited to participate. Of those 92 chose to complete the survey, a response rate of just over 59%.

The first statement of the survey read, “*The teaching of all subjects at Belen Jesuit has the potential to be world-affirming.*” In the index of terms attached to the survey, world-affirming was defined by stating,

Jesuit education affirms the radical goodness of the world, tries to create a sense of wonder and mystery in learning about God’s creation, probes the meaning of human life and is concerned with the total formation of each student as an individual personally loved by God.

The first statement questions whether the respondents believe it is possible for the educational experience provided the students at Belen Jesuit to be world-affirming. The results were overwhelmingly positive as shown here:

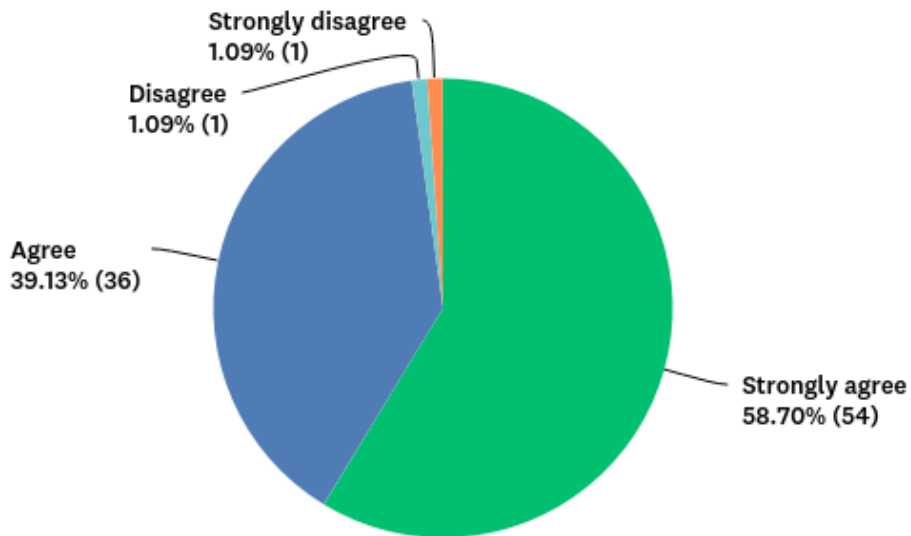


Chart 2.1

Almost 98% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed. A comment left by one respondent offers some clarity on this matter.

Yes, every subject in themselves has the potential to be world-affirming. However, the world-affirming teaching potential of the subject is contingent upon each individual teacher and their subjective faith and outlook. I do not believe our faculty as a whole is world-affirming. I have heard firsthand from high school students that a number of teachers do not encourage them to attend school-sponsored retreats because they will miss class and warn them that “catching-up” will be significantly difficult. Students are very concerned with their academic standing in their careers and more often than not opt not to attend retreats. This fosters the concern for academic “excellence” rather than a world-affirming experience through the particular subject matter.

The key word in the statement is “potential.” The comment separates the potential from the reality and points out a specific concern that is hindering the potential of world-affirming education from becoming a reality. The comment also addresses the reality that each individual faculty member is a variable in this equation. If any faculty member is not committed to a vision of world-affirming education, it can have consequences beyond their own classroom. This concern leads directly into the next statement of the survey.

The second statement was as follows: “*It is possible for every teacher to approach his/her teaching as world-affirming.*” This statement differs slightly from the first. The first asked about subject areas, while this asks about the teachers. The statements are similar in that they both indicate the possibility of world-affirming education and not necessarily its reality at Belen Jesuit. The results again were overwhelmingly positive.

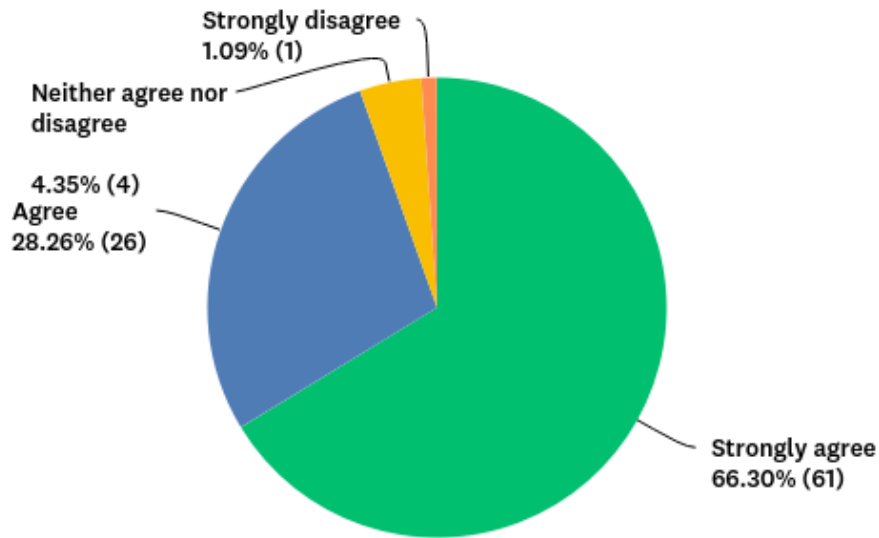


Chart 2.2

Almost 95% either agreed or strongly agreed with the great majority strongly agreeing. A much smaller percentage did not have an opinion on the matter and only one person strongly disagreed. Several comments left by respondents bring this data into focus:

I think it is possible but not everyone is at the same level of comfort

Additional training and formation for faculty is needed to attain this goal, but it is a doable goal.

Through each teacher's commitment to the Jesuit ideal of the *cura personalis*, a world-affirming approach can be experienced each day by the students. The individualized care for the person forms strong component of this approach.

The key word in this statement is "possible." The respondents seem optimistic about the possibility, but those that commented recognize that there is room to improve in this area with one individual noting the need for additional formation.

The third statement of the survey read, "*All classes taught at a Catholic, Jesuit school are expected to have a religious center that permeates the entire educational*

experience of the student.” In the index of terms provided, “religious center” is defined by stating that “The pedagogy of Jesuit education includes a religious (namely, Catholic, Christian and Jesuit) dimension that permeates the entire educational experience of a student including the classroom, stage, and playing field.” This statement is a bit more direct than the previous two. It is not asking about potential or possibility. It is not asking what *could* be, but what *should* be. Again the results are positive.

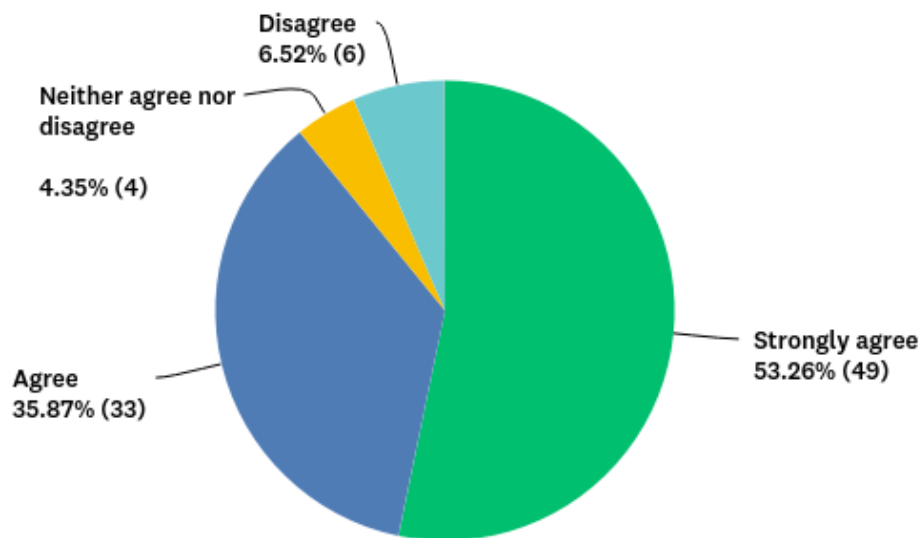


Chart 2.3

Over 89% of respondents either agreed or strong agreed while just 11% either had no opinion or disagreed. The key word in this statement is “expected.” This again does not necessarily mean that this is the reality and some of the comments left by respondents reflect this. The comments themselves sometimes diverged.

The religious center could be translated as center in Christ and in the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm. Definitely it comes out through the educator’s attitudes and actions. Applies to all courses taught.

This comment addresses the variable of the individual teacher, but implies that this religious center should exist in all courses taught. A second comment states,

Sometimes the removal of religious nature can give deeper meaning to the subject matter.

While the commenter did not elaborate further, I have found that when studying the Bible, for example, reviewing the historical circumstances and conditions that existed during the time of the story and during the time of the author can unearth further truth.

The fourth statement in the survey states: *“The act of teaching is ministerial in nature.”* In the index of terms, ministerial is defined by stating “Teaching is a vocation that provides service to God, our students, and their parents.” The question involves two concepts: vocation and service and whether or not they help define the nature of teaching. The intention of the question was to gauge if the respondents believed that the nature of teaching goes beyond lesson planning, lecturing, and grading. The data revealed a continuing positive trend.

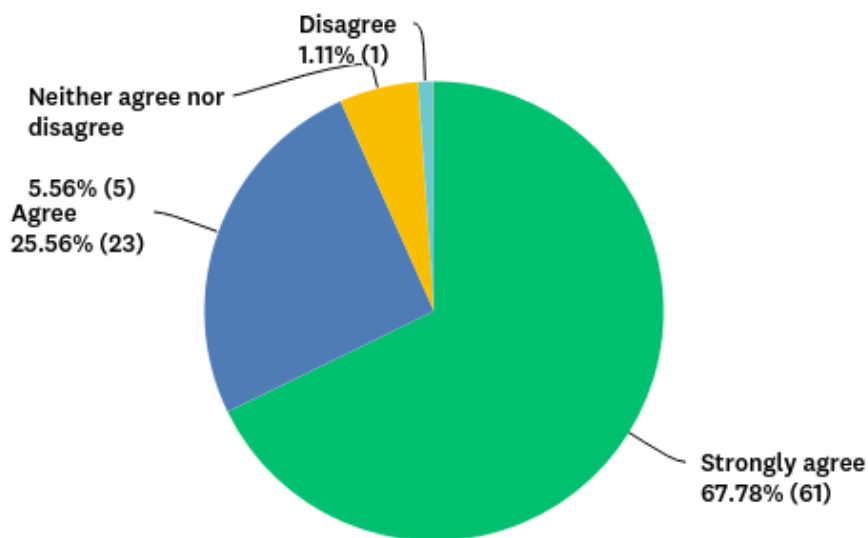


Chart 2.4

Over 93% either agreed or strongly agreed. The respondents recognize that there is something deeper going on when they drive to the school every day. One of the comments left for this statement echoes this sentiment:

Teaching is a vocation, not a job. Teachers must be examples to the students they interact with every day. They must minister God's love to everyone they come in contact with.

This seems to support the insight of Gloria Durka in her book, *The Teacher's Calling: A Spirituality for Those Who Teach*:

[T]eaching cannot merely be treated as a routine job – it flows from an inner incentive. Teaching is more a vocation than it is a job, and it is much easier to change jobs than it is to switch vocations.... We grow to understand that teaching is a calling that makes claims on our souls.³¹

The fifth statement of the survey adds a caveat to the fourth. It states, “*The teaching of all subjects is ministerial in nature.*” While the respondents seem to agree that teaching is ministerial in nature, this statement focuses specifically on the subjects taught. What is ministerial about teaching math, or science, or history? Can one be “called” to teach these subjects? Can one provide “service” by teaching these subjects? The answer seems to be “Yes.”

³¹ Gloria Durka, *The Teacher's Calling: A Spirituality for Those Who Teach*. (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2002), 3.

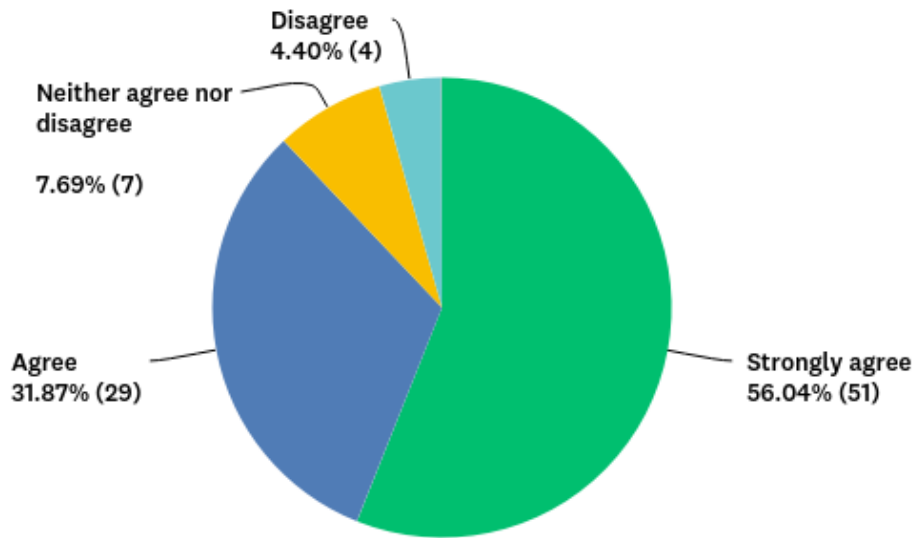


Chart 2.5

Almost 88% of respondents answered favorably. One of the comments made in reaction to this statement was:

Some teachers and some departments are clearer about this than others.

Another comment stated,

Again, it should be and in our school it ought to be and must be. This is not yet a reality.

The sixth statement of survey read as follows: “*All teachers in all subjects at Belen Jesuit teach in a manner that is world-affirming in nature.*” The key word in this statement is “all.” It would seem that not *all* teachers in *all* subjects do this.

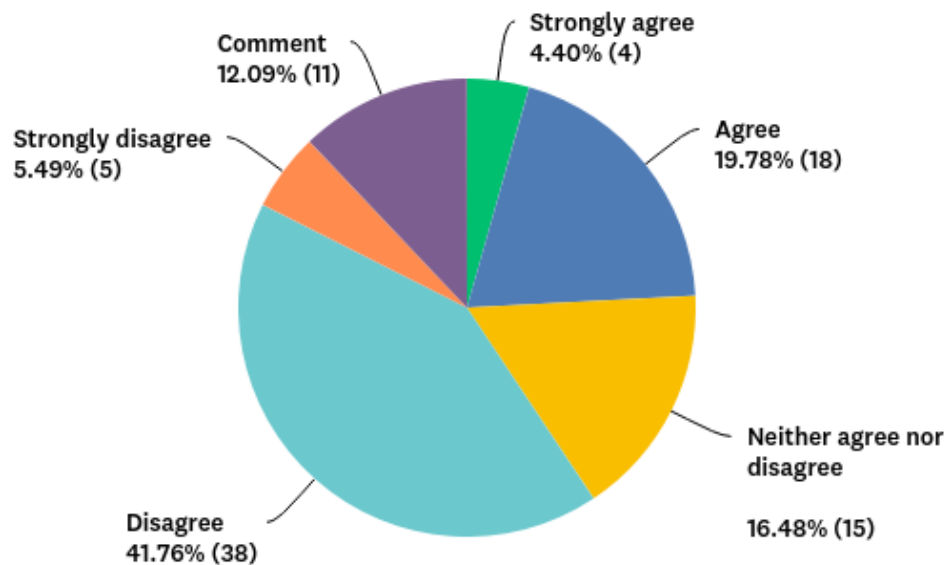


Chart 2.6

Just over 25% of the respondents agree or strongly agree. About 16.5% chose not to express an opinion and just over 47% disagree or strongly disagree. Most of the 11 comments offered focused on the use of the word “all” in the statement. A few claimed that it would be ideal if this was the case, but it is not the reality. For example, one commenter stated,

Currently not all, but there is certainly the potential to.

Another said,

A good number of our teachers do but there is a lot of room for improvement. We must absorb the mission before we can communicate its essence.

The seventh statement of the survey was the following: *“Belen Jesuit Preparatory School can and must do more to emphasize the importance of world-affirming education based on Jesuit values or on the Principles of Jesuit Education.”*

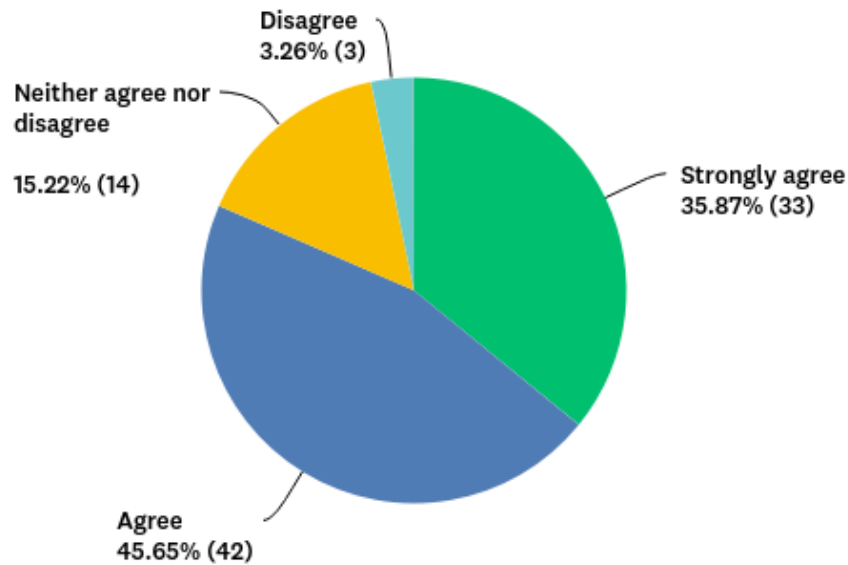


Chart 2.7

Over 81.5% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed. The data collected from previous statements established that the potential to do more exists, but this statement adds the word “must.” The addition implies that doing more is necessary if Belen Jesuit is to fulfill its mission statement. It was this statement that elicited the lengthiest comments:

I feel that the school is constantly emphasizing the importance of world-affirming education based on the Jesuit principles and values; however, what I think becomes difficult is in being able to evaluate to what extent it is actually being carried out in the classrooms

There is a strain of worldliness and striving for success in worldly terms as the primary value than runs through some elements of the alumni, parents, students, and even faculty. This pulls the school in conflicting directions.

I believe we say the right things in regards to the importance Belen places on our Catholic Jesuit identity. This importance and emphasis however, does not transfer into actual application in each teacher’s classroom. During the hiring and staffing process, I feel the focus must be more on what the potential employee offers as a ‘ministerial teacher’ and not just a ‘teacher/educator.’

Some individuals in the community need to be addressed, monitored and mentored. Sometimes I feel that they are working against what the rest of us are trying to accomplish.

This statement also elicited some criticism of the school’s ability to evaluate where the individual teacher stands with regard to providing world-affirming education. Comments also seem to criticize the culture that seems to have developed in the school, implying that that Belen Jesuit “talks the talk” but doesn’t “walk the walk.” There was also evidence of outright divisiveness where some people referred to as “them” and others as “us.” The data gathered from this statement seems to be indicative of the current situation Belen Jesuit is facing in its attempt to provide world-affirming education.

Statement eight of the survey read, “*Belen Jesuit Preparatory School can and must do more to emphasize and conduct teaching as a sacramental act.*” This statement takes statement seven to the next level. This statement elicited the highest percentage of the “neither agree nor disagree” response in the survey.

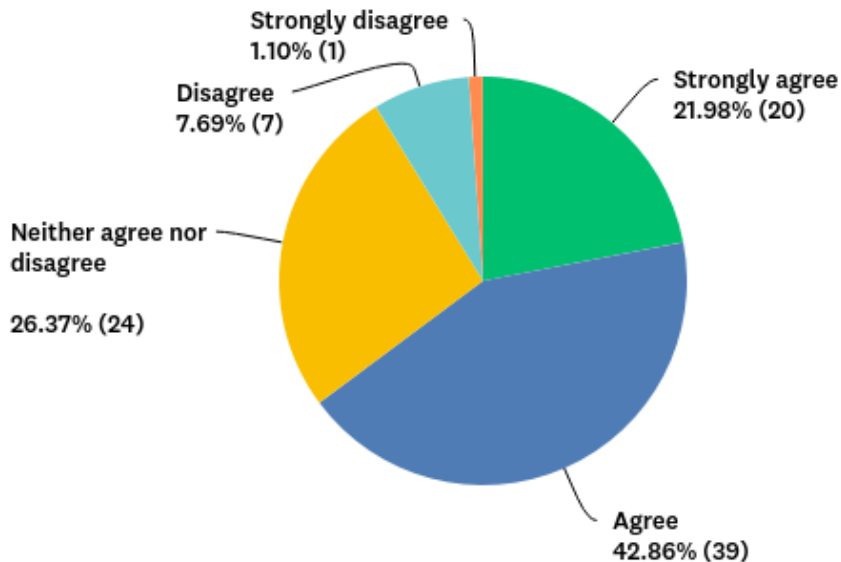


Chart 2.8

The respondents who agreed or strongly agreed amounted to almost 65%. Those who chose not to express an opinion amounted to over 26% of respondents. Again there are find divergent opinions in the comments:

I believe that this is a personal choice and motivation that each teacher must make and that school institution cannot force it. It can be recommended and training offered on how to do it but could not be mandated or controlled.

This speaks to the lack of Catholic identity amongst the faculty and must be fostered with an increase of communal prayer and faith sharing.

The first commenter seems to imply that emphasizing teaching as a sacramental act is not necessary for the entire faculty, nor is it the role of administration to mandate this perspective. The second commenter seems to conclude that this isn't happening but it should, and suggests some responses to the situation.

The ninth statement of the survey was as follows: *“Emphasizing education as world-affirming enables Belen Jesuit Preparatory School to live its mission statement more effectively.”* In the index of terms, the school's mission statement appears –

Following the Ignatian tradition of excellence, the mission of Belen Jesuit Preparatory School as a Catholic, Jesuit school is to guide and support our students in their process of becoming men who are proficient in both English and Spanish, open to growth, intellectually competent, religious, loving, and committed to doing justice, so they can work as leaders for the defense of faith and the promotion of justice in a multicultural society.

The respondents had a very positive reaction to this statement.

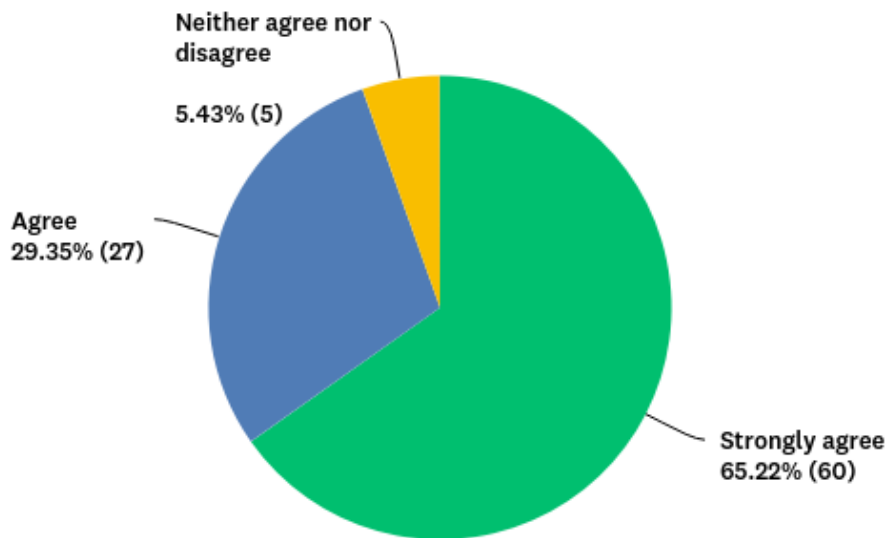


Chart 2.9

None of the 92 respondents disagreed with this statement. The overwhelming majority responded positively to the connection between world-affirming education and the mission of the school. They seem to acknowledge that world-affirming education a good thing, that it needs to happen, and that the mission of Belen Jesuit would profit from its emphasis.

The final statement of the survey read, *“Promoting teaching as a sacramental act will enable Belen Jesuit Preparatory School to live its mission statement more effectively.”* The last two statements of the survey bring the school’s mission statement into the forefront of the dialogue with teaching as a sacramental act.

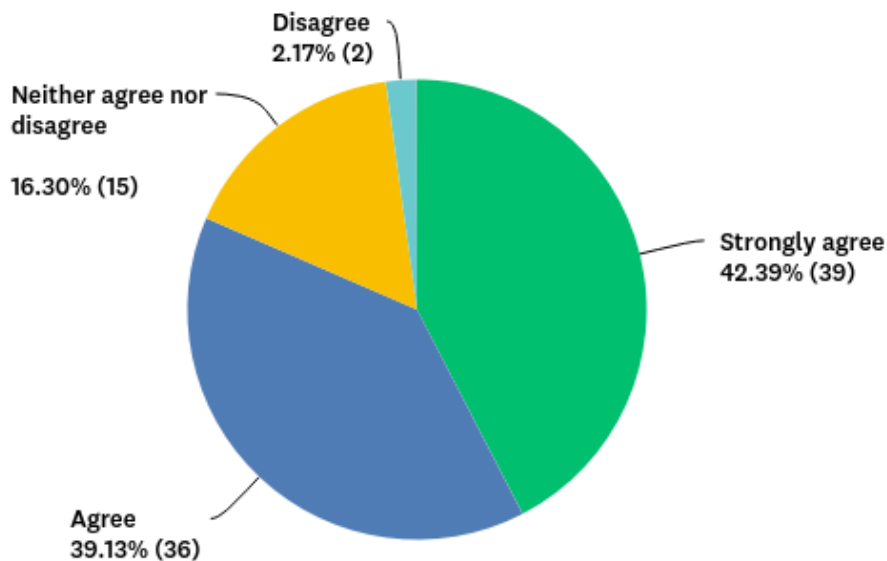


Chart 2.10

Over 81.5% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement; however, it is noteworthy that the two statements that specifically mentioned this concept of teaching as a sacramental act received the highest percentages of those who did not voice an opinion.

SURVEY OF BELEN JESUIT ALUMNI

Results

A second population who could assess the world-affirming nature of the education provided at Belen Jesuit are the alumni of the five most recent graduating classes from Belen Jesuit. These are the alumni from Classes of 2013-2017. Out of those classes exactly 1,000 alumni had contact information on file with Belen Jesuit’s Alumni Office and were invited to participate. Out of those, 80 responded to the survey, a rate of 8%. The statements of the alumni survey mirrored the statements in the faculty survey; the

alumni were also given ten statements to respond with the same five choices as the faculty. They were also given the same index of terms.

The first statement, “*The overall education I received at Belen Jesuit Preparatory School was world-affirming,*” asks the alumnus to evaluate their entire experience at Belen Jesuit in this regard.

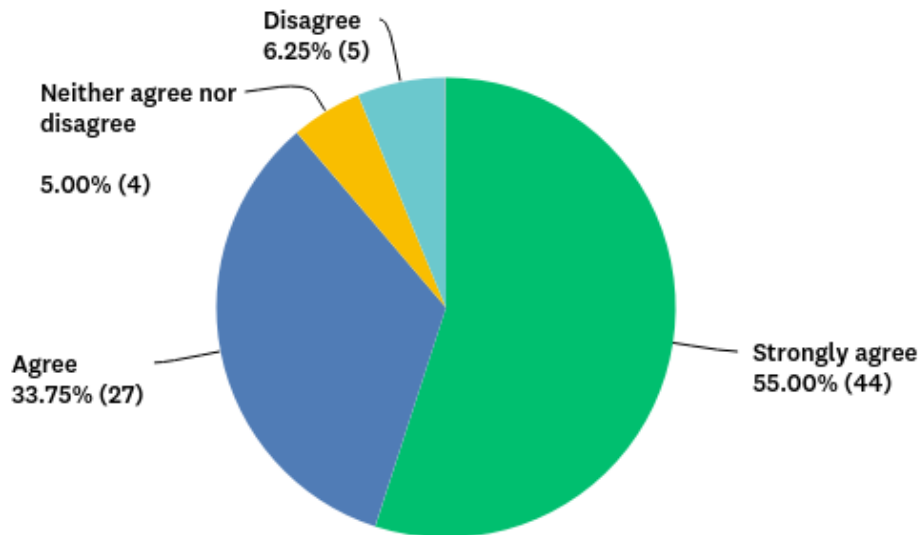


Chart 2.11

Almost 89% responded positively to this statement. One respondent introduced an interesting caveat,

I received an incredible education from Belen, but I entered Belen particularly non-religious so while I do believe in the ‘radical goodness of the world’ I don’t believe it has anything to do with God.

This respondent seems to want to separate the notion of being world-affirming from the notion of God. It has to be noted that the idea of world-affirming education is that the world affirms the existence and presence of God. If this graduate believes that the radical

goodness of the world has nothing to do with God, then his response is not indicative of world-affirming education as defined.

The second statement of the alumni survey, “*Most of the teachers who taught me at Belen Jesuit provided a world-affirming education,*” drew responses that do not seem to reflect the types of comments that were left.

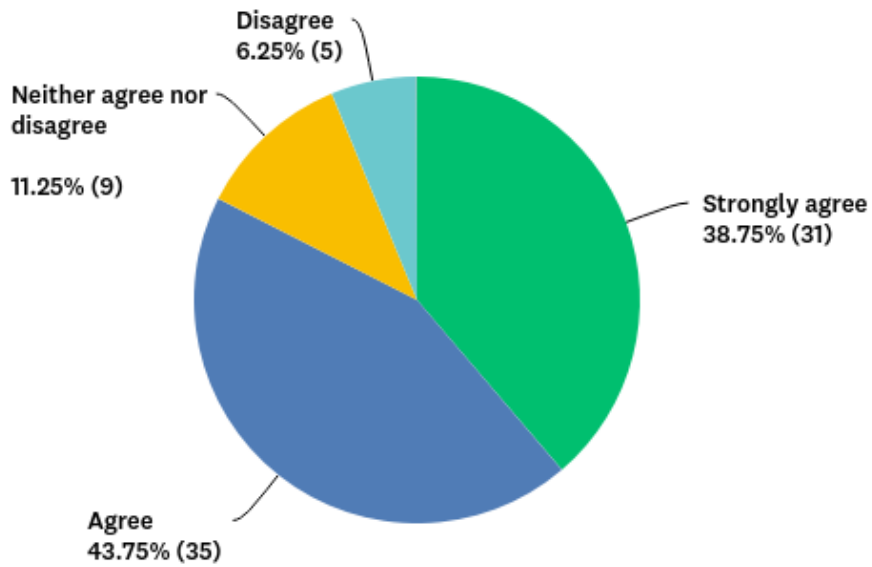


Chart 2.12

According to the data, 82.5% of respondents were favorable to this statement.

However, out of the six comments that were left, only two of them were positive. One of them stated:

Many of my teachers were adamant on us praying and making certain that we thanked God for the many things we had. I very much appreciated the act of appreciation that was instilled because often times it sounds like prayers are just acts of begging or pleading that the Creator will do what you ask.

One the respondents named specific teachers and described them as having “helped me believe in the goodness of people by being competent, fair, and caring teachers.” That same respondent then gave a list of other teachers and stated of them that they

...did not help provide a ‘world-affirming’ education. They took out their emotional problems on their students, taught their subject incompetently, and allowed or even encouraged bullying.

The third statement of the alumni survey, “*Most of the classes I took at Belen Jesuit had a religious center that permeated my education experience while I was a student there,*” revealed disagreement between the percentage of people who responded positively and the comments that were left. Most of the comments left were from those who disagreed with the statement.

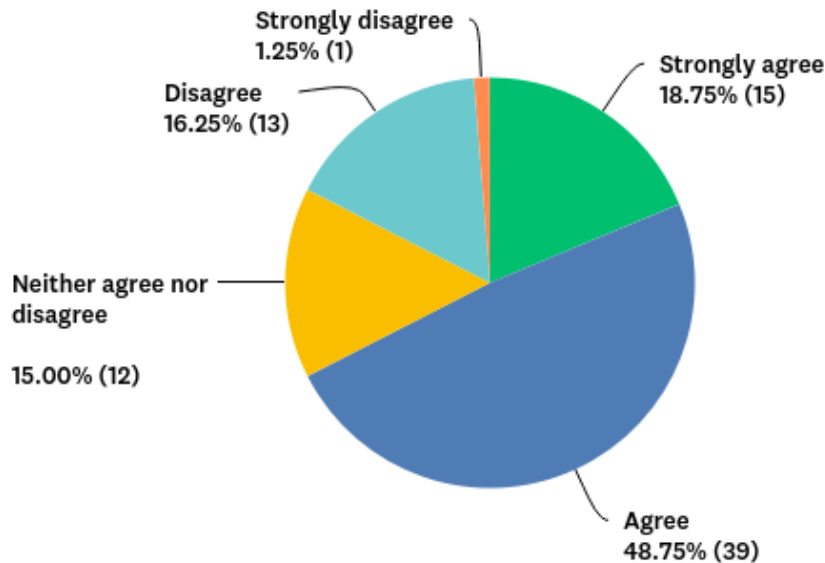


Chart 2.13

67.5% of respondents had a favorable reaction to this, although many fewer strongly agreed with it. Many comments expressed the idea that classes should not have a religious center and one stated that if they did it was “detrimental.”

While several classes began with a prayer or had some sort of element of the Jesuit education forced in, I personally believed that to instill a religious center in every course is detrimental to anyone's education and would create an almost hatred for the Church as happened to me and several of my peers upon matriculation. There was no need to make every course religious, especially that a main focus of Jesuit education is to educate the whole person and to be open to educating those of other religions. Once again, this was something I only noticed upon entering a Jesuit university.

Another respondent commented “This is good because the real world is secular and learning material is better than making religious connections. Most teachers do relate topics to religion when it is relevant to the situation.” A third respondent commented, “Some teachers yes, others no. It truly depends on the class. Math is a hard course to include God in without it seeming unnecessarily forced.”

The fourth statement, “*The teaching I received at Belen Jesuit was ministerial in nature,*” garnered 75% agreement from the respondents.

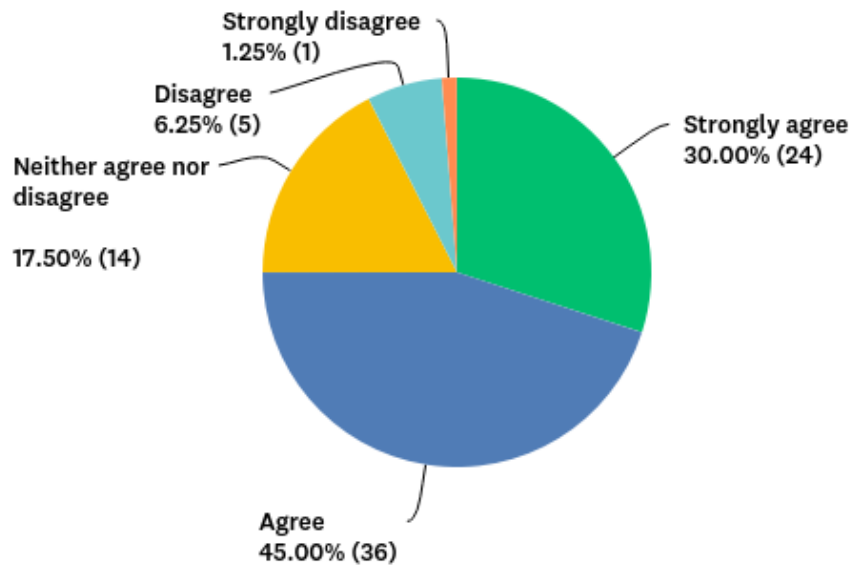


Chart 2.14

Two comments indicated that these alumni were taught about the importance of serving others through the example they received and another was happy that the education he received was not ministerial in nature. However, none of these comments addressed the ministerial nature of the *teaching* they received. They did not comment on whether they felt that the teaching they received demonstrated that a vocation to serve God, the students, and their parents.

To the fifth statement, “*Most of the teachers who instructed me Belen Jesuit saw their teaching as a ministry,*” over 66% of respondents answered favorably.

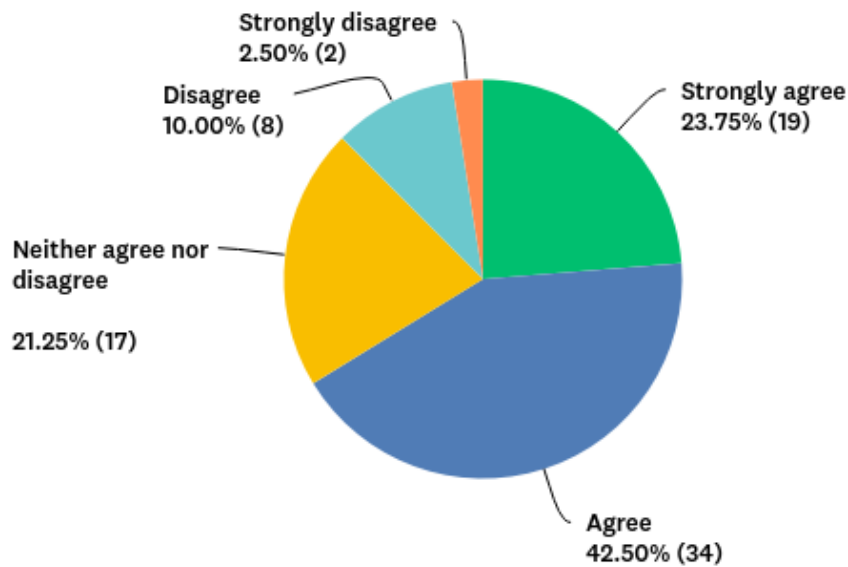


Chart 2.15

The comments were also mostly favorable although two of three indicate that this notion existed with their theology teachers for the most part. One commenter stated,

Fortunately, many of the teachers at Belen Jesuit felt a calling to teach and gave it their all on any given day. The passion that they presented daily was one of the reasons why I left Belen with a not purely negative attitude towards the Church.

The second commenter said,

I wouldn't say I got this perception from my teachers. On the other hand, there were teachers who did admit teaching was their vocation -- but these teachers were predominantly theology teachers.

The third commenter stated,

I think most of my teachers were very good about just teaching their subjects and not really expanding outside of that. My religion teachers were the only ones who really emphasized the ministry aspect.

The sixth statement, “*Teachers in all subjects taught in a manner that is world-affirming in nature,*” drew a favorable response from 80% of participants.

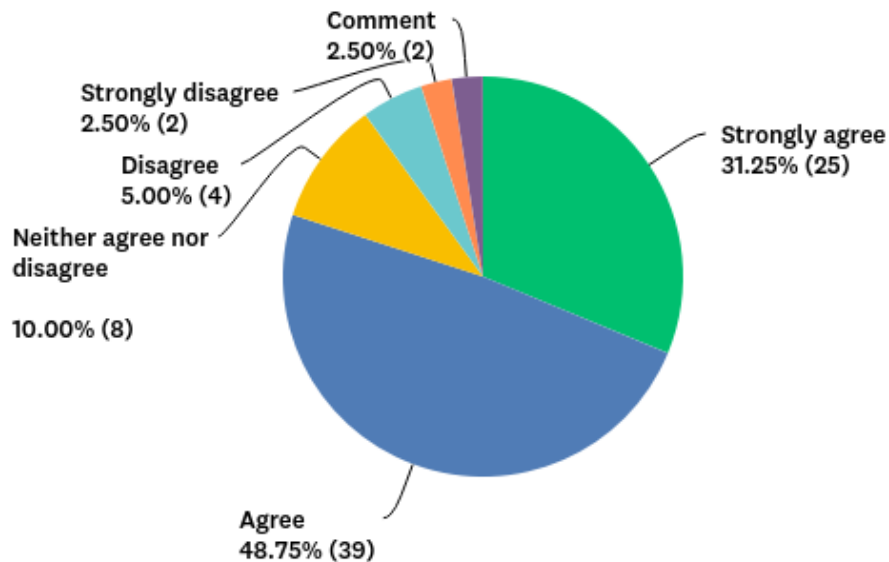


Chart 2.16

There were only two comments; each indicated that this did not happen much outside of theology. “Primarily theology teachers did so and teachers who personally were very spiritual.”

The responses to the seventh statement, “*Belen Jesuit could have done more to emphasize the importance of world-affirming education on Jesuit values or on the Principles of Jesuit Education,*”

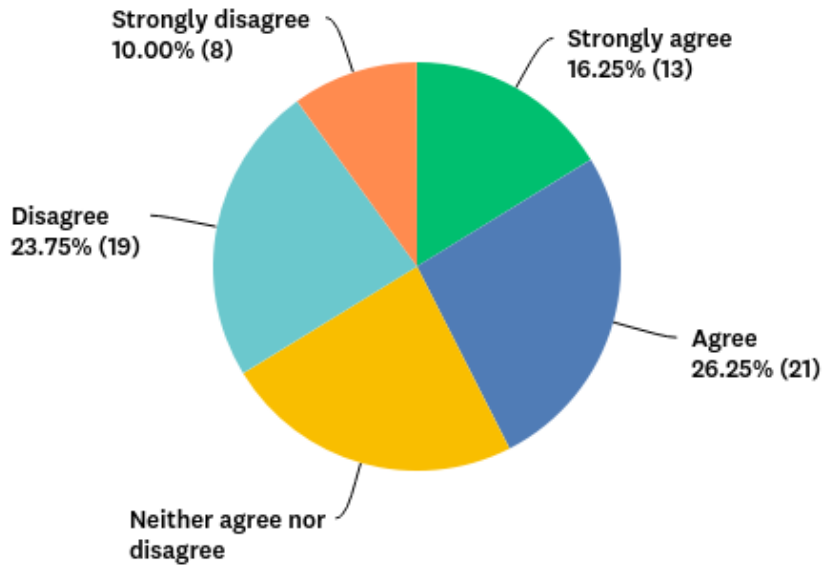


Chart 2.17

The responses were fairly evenly spread with 42.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing. A large percentage, almost 24%, chose not to express an opinion on this statement.

Responses to the eighth statement of the survey, “*Most of the teachers who instructed me at Belen Jesuit conducted their teaching as a sacramental act,*” reflected some uncertainty similar to that of the faculty on the part of the respondents.

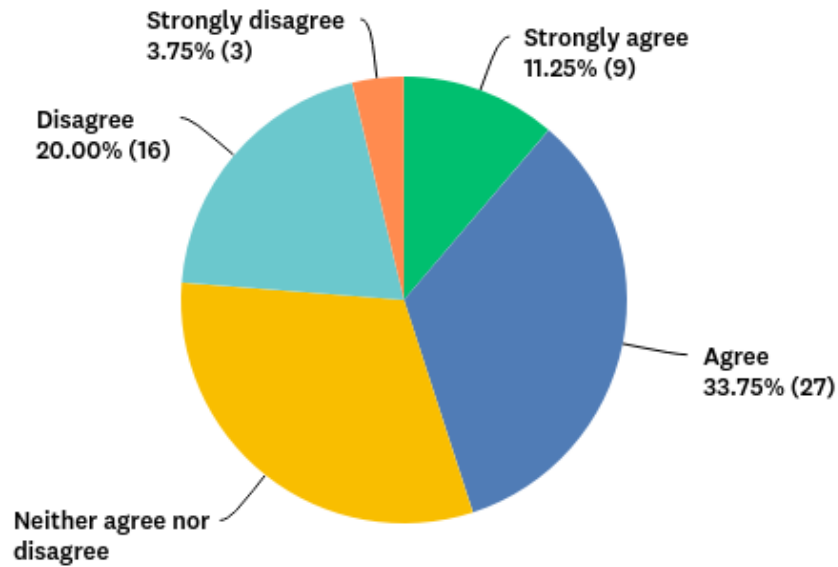


Chart 2.18

The majority of respondents gave a positive answer, but 25 of the 80 respondents, over 31%, did not express an opinion. Two of the four comments that were offered stated they didn't see this outside of a theology class. The first of the two said,

Math and science classes don't dabble much in this area.

Examples were given of specific subjects whose teachers did not see their teaching as a sacramental act. The second stated,

Primarily theology teachers did so and teachers who personally were very spiritual.

The ninth statement, "*When Belen Jesuit emphasized the world-affirming nature of education, it was better equipped to live its mission statement,*" garnered highly

positive results in both percentages and in comments.

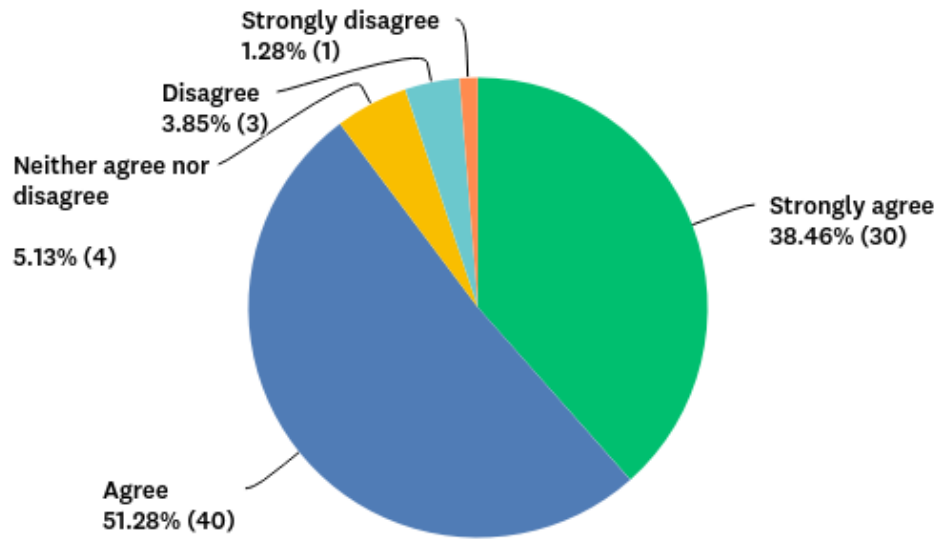


Chart 2.19

Almost 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. The two comments that were offered reflected this:

Belen strives to make Men for Others in tomorrow's world, and I strongly believe that Belen has achieved this. While naturally there may be some outliers, I can say that Belen accomplishes its mission statement in a superior manner.

By being world-affirming, that is, affirming of those of all backgrounds, Belen Jesuit was better equipped to live its mission statement, particularly in creating men who are open to growth, intellectual, and promoting justice.

The tenth and final statement, *“If the teachers at Belen Jesuit conducted their ministry of teaching as a sacramental act, Belen Jesuit would be better equipped to live its mission statement,”* resulted in mostly positive responses, but with a large percentage not expressing an opinion.

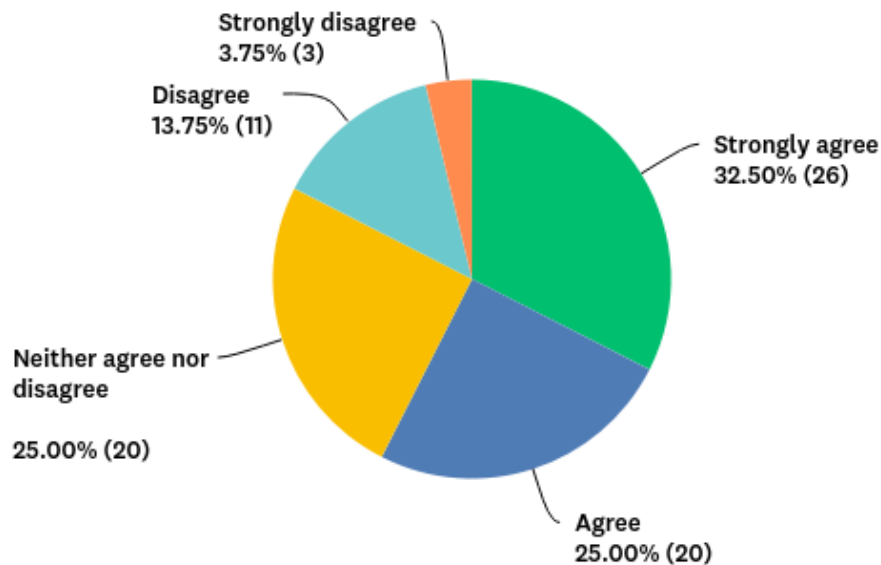


Chart 2.20

57.5% responded favorably, which is low compared to the other statements of the survey. The majority of comments seemed to be against the notion of seeing teaching as a sacramental act. The following quote is indicative of this perspective.

Belen, being an educational institution, should make its mission to educate students. Religion should not intertwine with this process, particularly with math, science, literature, etc. Theology teachers at Belen were incredible, taught with a world-affirming view, and treated their classes sacramental. However this is where it should end.

COMPARING AND CONTRASTING THE RESULTS OF THE TWO SURVEYS

The scope and participation in these two surveys was very different. The percentage of participation among administrators, faculty, and counselors at Belen Jesuit was higher than that of the alumni. In the case of the faculty, as the researcher, I presented a

description of the project first-hand. I had no contact with the alumni; they were introduced to and asked to participate in the project via email from the Alumni Office.

In both surveys the majority of responses in the form of multiple choice were positive. Here is the breakdown of responses across all ten statements in the faculty survey:

- Strongly Agree – 432 total responses out of a possibility of 904 or 47.79%
- Agree – 309 total responses or 34.18%
- Neither agree nor disagree – 93 total responses or 10.29%
- Disagree – 62 total responses or 6.86%
- Strongly Disagree – 8 total responses or 0.88%

The breakdown of responses across all the statements in the alumni survey is as follows:

- Strongly agree – 236 total responses out of a possibility of 796 or 29.65%
- Agree – 318 total responses or 39.95%
- Neither agree nor disagree – 132 total responses or 16.58%
- Disagree – 89 total responses or 11.18%
- Strongly Disagree – 21 total responses or 2.64%

Overall, the percentage of positive responses was higher among faculty (81.97%) than among alumni (69.6%).

In both surveys, the majority of respondents chose not to comment. In the faculty survey, the most comments received for a single statement was 12 for Statement Two. On average, there were about six comments per statement. Out of the 62 total comments made, 46 of them were affirming of the statements of the survey (74%). The two statements which received more negative comments than positive were the two statements that mentioned teaching as a sacramental act.

In the alumni survey, the most comments received for a single statement was eight and that was for Statements Three and Ten. On average, there were about five comments per statement. Out of the 48 comments made, only 18 were affirming of the survey statements (37.5%). Six of the ten statements of the survey received more

negative comments than positive. The comments for statements two, four, seven, and nine were mostly positive.

The general trends that that were observed were that the faculty strongly agreed with the statements of the survey more frequently than the alumni who generally tended to agree more than they strongly agreed. The alumni used the “neither agree nor disagree,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree” options much more frequently than the faculty.

In general, the faculty agreed that the potential exists for world-affirming education to occur in all subjects. The alumni mostly supported this idea by agreeing that world-affirming education was part of their overall educational experience at Belen Jesuit. The faculty also agreed with the possibility that every teacher could approach their ministry as world-affirming. The alumni supported this by generally agreeing that most of their teachers did provide a world-affirming education. When it came to the question regarding emphasizing teaching as a sacramental act, however, both faculty and alumni posted almost identical amounts of the “neither agree nor disagree” option; 24 and 25 respectively. The clear majority of both faculty (95%) and alumni (90%) agree that world-affirming education would further the mission statement of Belen Jesuit. However, both faculty and alumni also had reasonably high percentages of the “neither agree nor disagree” option when it came to the statement about teaching as a sacrament act furthering the mission statement of the school (16.3% and 25% respectively).

In contrast, a much higher percentage of faculty (66.3%) strongly agreed with the possibility every teacher approaching their ministry as world-affirming than alumni (38.75%). The clear majority of faculty believe that Belen Jesuit, as a Catholic, Jesuit

school is expected to have a religious center that permeates the entire educational experience of the student (89%). In contrast only 67.5% of alumni agreed. Nearly 68% of faculty strongly agreed that teaching is ministerial in nature, while only 30% of alumni strongly agreed that they received teaching that was ministerial in nature. 88% percent of faculty gave a positive response to the notion that the teaching of all subjects is ministerial in nature, while only 66% of alumni gave a positive response. Over 47% of faculty disagreed or strongly disagreed that all teachers in all subjects teach in a world-affirming manner. In contrast 80% of alumni agreed or strongly agreed that they received world-affirming education from all their teachers in all their subjects. 81.5% of faculty felt that Belen Jesuit can and must do more to emphasize the importance of world-affirming education while only 42% of alumni felt that the school could have done more in this respect. 81.5% of faculty believe promoting teaching as a sacramental act would further the mission statement of the school while only 57.5% of alumni agree.

From these comparisons and contrasts it appears that the faculty of Belen Jesuit is strong in its belief that education should be world-affirming, that all its teachers have the potential to provide world-affirming education, and that the nature of teaching is ministerial. However, it seems that they may overall be weaker in their execution of these notions. There appears to be a divide between the acceptance of the theories and putting those theories into practice. It also appears that teaching as a sacramental act is a concept that is further away from the thoughts of the faculty and alumni of Belen Jesuit than world-affirming education.

RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

For the purpose of this project, 14 people were interviewed with the same ten questions. Six of the 14 held administrative positions at Belen Jesuit while the remaining eight were faculty members. Before each interview, the interviewee was given a list of the questions to review as well as an index of terms which included definitions of “world-affirming,” and “ministerial.” The interviewees had various levels of experience in teaching overall and teaching at Belen Jesuit. They displayed varying degrees of knowledge about the Characteristics of Jesuit Education. The data demonstrate that they had varying degrees of formation in Jesuit pedagogy from Belen Jesuit. A few of the interviewees are also alumni of Belen Jesuit and some of their responses recall that experience. Some also currently have children who are students at the school or who have recently graduated.

The first question of the interview asked, *“To what extent do you believe all education should be world-affirming as conceived in the values and principles of Jesuit education?”* Many of the interviewees asked about the use of the word “all” in the question. Some suggested that education should be world-affirming in a Catholic, Jesuit atmosphere, but not in a secular one. However, one administrator disagreed:

For individuals who received this kind of world-affirming education, they understand that there’s a reason to be good. There’s a reason to fight for what is right, to live in the truth, to experience the beauty of the world because it will only make the world that much more a greater place.

Nothing in this response deems a separation between a school which is designed to have a religious center and a secular school. Another administrator did see a religious overtone in the question and stated:

The reason we teach, we have a school here at Belen is to form men of faith and by creating this sense of wonder in God's creation, in the ability to talk about respecting life from birth to death is very important for our young men to hear and see. It's part of their formation and we hope that as they grow up to be young men in the world that they represent those values and make a change in our world that needs it so much.

A third administrator commented, "It certainly would be a benefit since we stand by Catholic, Ignatian principles that all education should be world-affirming, but that's not indicative of the world in which we live." The same administrator goes on to say, "I wish it were so, but I think if education in the non-Ignatian, non-Catholic sector were, at least, principle-based education, I think that would be a good start."

Many of the rest of the responses from both administrators and faculty separated their answers into what should occur in a Catholic, Jesuit school and what should occur in a secular school. A faculty member commented,

I think anybody that comes here to Belen, comes with the understanding that our mission here is to be fully invested in the idea that our students need to be guided in the knowledge of all their subject areas so that we make them well-rounded and concerned individuals.

Another faculty member responded after asking for a clarification of whether or not the question implied all education or just education at Belen.

I don't think that it should be all education everywhere because I think if you're choosing to send your child to a public school then maybe you don't want the Jesuit principles if perhaps you are of a different faith... But I think if you were choosing to have your child at a Catholic or a Jesuit school, I think it should.

Question two asked, "*To what extent do you believe the teachers at Belen Jesuit know what world-affirming education is and do their best to provide it?*" The question is

two-fold. It is a question that involves knowledge and will. Many of the faculty members, in particular, that were interviewed seemed as if they had never heard the term “world-affirming” before this research was begun. Once they saw or heard the definition, it seemed to make sense; many stated in their interviews that the term itself is not used frequently, if at all.

We don't use the word 'world-affirming' too much.

I don't think so, because I, myself, was not familiar with the term 'world-affirming education' before this process.

World-affirming is not something that I, who have been here for 15 years have readily heard.

I don't think we've been exposed to thinking about education in this kind of way...

I want to say that we don't know this that well... I remember for many years Ignatian pedagogy or the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm was a big part of the start to year orientation process... I think we are due for a refresher. ...we don't use that vocabulary.

For the most part, our teachers know what world-affirming is. I don't think we speak about it as much as we should.

While the Belen Jesuit school community is very much aware of its Jesuit foundation, the data from the interviews seems to suggest an unfamiliarity with the term used in the first characteristic of Jesuit education. Many of the interviewees alluded to the Jesuit mantra of “Finding God in All Things,” however, this is not completely synonymous with a world-affirming perspective.

The third question asked, “*To what extent was world-affirming education communicated to you in your formative years as a teacher/administrator at Belen Jesuit?*” The data showed that the administrators and faculty members that have been at

Belen Jesuit longer seemed to have received better and more direct formation in the idea of world-affirming education. As one noted, “I was a teacher here for 12 years before taking on [a greater role] and I remember what our faculty formation was like. They spoke about world-affirming.” Some of these long-standing members of the administrative team and faculty also benefited from attending Jesuit colloquiums that reinforced the concept of world-affirming education. There were some exceptions to this trend. In one such case, “As a teacher, when I started 31 years ago I don’t think the formation was there as much with the new teachers.” Also a more recent member of the administrative team believes the concept was made very clear: “even when I was hired in 2009, the concept of a world-affirming ability to teach from was something that was heavily impressed upon me.”

Thus, the data collected from asking this question was quite varied. One administrator’s testimony is particularly indicative:

I remember my second or third year here at Belen. The principal got up in front of the entire faculty at a meeting... and he asked us to list the Grad at Grad. The majority of us could only do two of them. Then he asked us what were some of the philosophies and values of an Ignatian educator and, although we do so many of those pieces, we could not articulate it. I think we’re definitely getting better, but we need to spend more time.

When faculty begin their careers at Belen Jesuit, they are, to varying degrees, exposed to the characteristics of Jesuit education. However, not much seems to be done to reinforce that knowledge as their careers continue. In this regard, many of the interviewees made reference to a program at Belen Jesuit for new faculty members known as Ordo. Every new member of the faculty or administrative team at Belen Jesuit must take part in this program for three years. The purpose of the program is to introduce them to the Jesuit

model of education. The program consists of periodic meetings with an appointed moderator and completing assigned readings and assessments. Introducing the concept of world-affirming education should be part of this program. With some of the interviewees it was, but for others it was not. Hence, the data gathered from the responses to this question indicates an inconsistency on the part of Belen Jesuit in informing its teachers about world-affirming education and also in reinforcing the concept beyond the formative years of new faculty members.

The fourth question posed at the interviews asked, *“To what extent does Belen Jesuit assist its teachers in providing world-affirming education to their students?”* Although many faculty members are not familiar with the term, this does not necessarily mean that they are not being encouraged and supported in providing it. The data indicates that the encouragement and support are there, but in indirect ways. In other words, the faculty is given full support in providing world-affirming education, but they are not necessarily aware that this is the purpose of the support they are receiving.

Most of the responses of the interviews point to one or more of the following three realities at Belen Jesuit: the Ordo program, retreats, and environment. These three realities go from a program with a very specific purpose to other support systems that are less direct. One administrator alluded to the Ordo program as something Belen Jesuit has put in place “for new teachers, which exposes them to what Jesuit education is all about.” Some faculty members mentioned it as well, but none of them connected the program specifically to world-affirming education. They always spoke about the program in general terms like “Jesuit education” or “Jesuit pedagogy,” both of which encompass much more than just providing world-affirming education.

Many interviewees mentioned the opportunities faculty members and administrators have to go on retreats. Belen Jesuit schedules two mandatory days of reflection for administrators and faculty every year. One takes place during the “In-Service Week,” which is a week-long period of preparation for the new school year that occurs the week before the students arrive. This week includes not only the retreat but opportunities for professional development, planning, department meetings, and the like. The other takes place the day before the Easter Break. Aside from those mandatory days, administrators and faculty members are invited to participate in or chaperone student retreats and days of reflection. In addition administrators and faculty have the option of attending a three-day version of the Spiritual Exercises. While opportunities for retreat are very frequent and available at Belen Jesuit, none of the interviewees that mentioned retreats as a means of support connected that support directly with providing world-affirming education. None of them recalled a specific retreat or day of reflection that directly supported this ideal.

The idea that Belen Jesuit provides the environment for teachers to provide world-affirming education is not well supported by the data collected. One administrator commented about the availability of the Spiritual Exercises and continued with, “I think the rest of the time the formation comes indirectly. I think it is part of our culture here.” Another administrator said, “We do our best in giving you [the teacher] the freedom to create in your curriculum the opportunity and the space for these things.” Another administrator made mention of two specific positions created to support the faculty in “continuous formation.” One of these is the Dean of Faculty, who is to “focus [his/her] time and attention to helping teachers become better teachers and implementing those

values of Jesuit education.” The same administrator made mention of the fact that, like every student at Belen Jesuit, the faculty also have a spiritual counselor who is a Jesuit priest who has worked in Jesuit schools for a long time.

While these positions represent concrete steps Belen Jesuit has taken to provide an environment conducive to providing a world-affirming education, some the of the data suggests that little is done to support teachers specifically and directly in providing world-affirming education. Some of the comments from interviewees that lead to this conclusion include:

We can do better and I think we have the obligation to do better, especially since it’s such a big part of the mission and the pillars of what the school is about...

I think we do through some (emphasis added) professional development opportunities but I also think that we have to do more of it again to revisit the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm...

I think we could do a lot better job of this... we don’t; bring it back to God. We don’t bring it back to the sense of wonder and mystery of learning... And unfortunately it’s too based on grades and catering to parents on those grades.

I don’t know that they actually help us really, as a teacher, integrate that into our classrooms.

...we don’t have workshops about...how to provide a world-affirming education to our students.

...we don’t receive the guidance we really need to be able to show it in our classrooms and to incorporate world-affirming education in our lesson plans actively.

...I think we ought to do more... I think that the day-to-day just clouds your mind and there are several times a year where you need to stop and reflect upon what you are doing.

The fifth question of the interview asked, “*Can you describe the support you have received from Belen Jesuit regarding providing a world-affirming education to the students and/or faculty within your purview?*” This question was asked the interviewees to look into their own experience and not just observe what is going on around them. While some of the responses indicated two extremes – one extreme was that no support was given and the other that there was overwhelming support – most of the responses fell between these two extremes. Many interviewees alluded to their personal experiences in the Ordo program, retreats, and service projects. Many also spoke of mentoring they received from other administrators or faculty members.

Mentorship seems to be a large component of support. Belen Jesuit has had an administrative team and the several veteran faculty members who readily take new teachers under their wing. Many of the interviewees confirm this experience:

I think Belen does a very good job in that... The support I received from our Dean of Men in helping me form boys into gentlemen and our students to be whole.

...but some of my biggest gains in terms of being able to provide my students with world-affirming curriculum is from hanging out with the talking to theology teachers and seeing what they're doing in their class and trying to figure out a way to thread that same needle with my content area.

I was given good mentors... when I started working here. My department head was a really good example of providing world-affirming education.

Belen has always supported, what they called ‘individualized’ or ‘personalized’ teaching... they always give you the flexibility and the freedom to work as you see fit... So the flexibility is certainly there and I think Belen has supported us faculty by providing us the freedom to be able to act based on how you see fit and how you're going to reach those goals.

We all ... had good mentoring back then... it was more of a mentorship, but it was more informal though.

When it came to discussing specific, personal support received in providing world-affirming education, many interviewees spoke of a lack thereof, and the opportunity to improve upon this.

I don't think that I received directly any guidance on how to incorporate that world-affirming education into my subject.

...not really...not direct, like this is what you should do... I haven't gotten it directly like this: 'This is how you should help your faculty in your department... achieve a world-affirming education.'

I don't feel that I have necessarily received any type of specific support... you interpret a lot of things yourself and you participate in the things you want to or not.

...I don't think we've received a lot of support on this... through evaluations... We evaluate on this but we don't necessarily teach it before the evaluation.

I think we can be better.

And given our time constraints and the lack of... teacher planning days and how quickly things sneak up on us... people lose sight if that because they just want to keep driving the train... you have new content, quiz, test grade, new chapter, which I totally get because that's what we're being asked to do. But... it's tough, it's easy to talk about and it's very tough to do and it takes a certain mindfulness to do it.

One of the interviewees mentioned something that was done in the past that has fallen out of practice in recent years at Belen. Certain after-school meetings were set aside for the different academic departments to meet. The interviewee said, "It was not unusual to have a Jesuit in our presence or at the very least a spiritual counselor and, in addition, a

member of the counseling department would be a participant in those meetings in order to provide some additional input.”

The sixth question that the interviewees were asked to comment on was this: *“Give examples of how you have made understanding world-affirming education relevant to the subject areas/responsibilities within your purview.”* This turns the question of providing world-affirming education toward the interviewees themselves and how they are providing support in the leadership roles they have. Since the nature of the question is more personalized, the results were much more varied.

One administrator mentioned a service project known as the “Belen Youth Mission.” This is a program that serves the poor in the Dominican Republic with a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, the entire school gets involved in collecting non-perishable food, medical supplies, and toiletries to be distributed to the poor. On the other hand, some of the older students actually go to the poorest areas of the Dominican Republic to personally distribute these items and also participate in a service project. This administrator describes this as a “very world-affirming, a very powerful experience [that is] incredibly relevant and not only for students but for faculty members because faculty members get invited all the time to participate in the youth mission and they do.”

This same administrator referenced a “strategic plan” that is in the process of being implemented at Belen Jesuit over the next five years. It is comprised of four “pillars” or specific areas of Belen Jesuit that need to be reinforced. The first of the four pillars is the “Catholic, Jesuit Identity.” This administrator describes the plan as “the roadmap for our school for the next five years and one of things that is very present in that strategic plan is insisting on a world-affirming education and how to make it a reality

and a possibility for our students.” A document was created and distributed to faculty, families, and alumni of Belen Jesuit that listed specific actions that are going to be taken in order to strengthen the Catholic, Jesuit identity of Belen Jesuit. Several other interviewees alluded to this strategic plan and the faculty meetings that have been held that have addressed it. While world-affirming education is part and parcel of Jesuit educational pedagogy, the strategic plan does not specifically mention it.

Many of faculty members that were interviewed spoke specifically about their subject area and how they personally have incorporated a world-affirming attitude there.

One administrator who also teaches two classes said,

you try to correlate or help students see the world is bigger than them. The study of those migration patterns and why they move on to the negative factors helps open their eyes to tragedy and how tragedy then motivates leaders to make incredible change.

A faculty member stated,

...there have been many opportunities for me to engage students and to challenge students on their viewpoints, in their outlooks towards events, not only in the past, but also try to make connections with the present.

Another faculty member sees the opportunity to provide world-affirming education on a more personal level rather than specifically linking it to their subject area. This is more about providing a good example for what a love of learning looks like.

Sharing my love for the subject, the love of learning; I'm asking my students to go there and look back on their mistakes so that they could understand what they did wrong or right versus just looking at the grade.

This same person spoke of “understanding the subject for the sake of understanding the subject, for the love of the subject. When my students see me teaching, they know that I

really enjoy what I teach.” One faculty member spoke specifically about science and math in a beautiful, world affirming way:

And to me it is very easy to be able to link science with creation, science with God, even mathematics and the language which is the language of creation is very simple to do... I think the openness of the Catholic Church is also very important. We don't have a fundamentalist view of things like creation and so on. So even though we do believe that the Bible is the Word of God, we feel it is a poetic representation of what actually happened.

Those who were interviewed did not seem struggle to find a way in which they personally made world-affirming education relevant in their responsibilities or subject area. Everyone shared a personal technique that they employ or a specific anecdote to share on this matter. The quality with which these techniques and anecdotes applied the concept of world-affirming education varied. It seemed that many of the interviewees equated ecumenism or introducing worldviews from other geographic and demographic areas equated to being world-affirming. Overall, there seemed to be a lack of genuine understanding of what world-affirming education really is. This intuition seems to be supported by many of the interviewees stating that the term “world-affirming” is not part of the vocabulary used at Belen Jesuit when it discusses its pedagogy and best practices with its faculty.

The seventh question asked was *“To what extent is the educational experience of the current students at Belen Jesuit truly world-affirming?”* In analyzing the data from the responses given to this question, one word kept popping up – “opportunity.” Almost all of the interviewees spoke of the great opportunities given to students at Belen Jesuit to experience world-affirming education. While some of the comments in the student survey seem to suggest that implementing a religious dimension in education would be a

negative thing, in counter-balance, the representatives of the administrative team and the faculty that were interviewed interpreted it differently. They do not see Belen Jesuit as forcing world-affirming education on its students, but rather providing an invitation or opportunity for the students to see their education as world-affirming. On this point, an administrator commented,

...it's part of the natural order for students to challenge beliefs and challenge authority and challenge systems. It's part of growth and it's one of the things that the Jesuits encouraged. It's not just about teaching, it's about learning to think.

A faculty member added, "Particularly I think some of the older ones are very vocal about their opposition to the Church."

The interviewees pointed out several ways in which they believe Belen Jesuit invites its students to see their education as world-affirming. One administrator points out, "I think that we take very seriously our motto of being 'Men for Others' and we provide for them all these different opportunities for them to exercise." Another spoke of our chapter of the Key Club going on a service project to Puerto Rico and of having a Vatican astronomer visit the school.

Last year I remember Br. Guy [Consolmagno] and I thought that was such an incredible presentation to the science students and the students asked that specific question: 'How do you find God in what you do in astronomy, in science?' And he said, 'How can I not.'

A faculty member alluded to the numerous service programs that are available for students to participate in.

I give all that credit to our theology teachers and those who are committed to all of our service programs. Well certainly not a week goes by without there being students involved in one way or another in helping others.

Another referenced the praying of the Examen every day and the fact that there were several opportunities for students and faculty to get together for prayer after school or to attend Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on the first Friday of every month. While these practices do reinforce the Catholic, Jesuit identity of the school, they are not specifically world-affirming practices. To that end they said, “But certainly we give them the instruments to be able to be a practicing Catholic and live a world-affirming life.”

In question eight, the interviewees were asked, “*To what extent do you believe that faculty and administrators at Belen Jesuit see their teaching as ministerial in nature?*” As in the survey, the response to the question was overwhelming positive. Almost all of the interviewees alluded to the fact that while not every teacher may see their work as ministerial, the majority of them do. One faculty member, in particular, summed up the attitude of all the interviewees:

When you see the number of teachers who have been here 15 years plus. I, myself, have been here 32. There is something more than this being merely a job where you’re clocking in and out. When you see the level of commitment that teachers show outside the classroom, being involved in events throughout the school year, in informal gatherings where faculty and staff are enjoying each other’s company. When you see the level of admiration that the students have for what their teachers have done through letters that they’ll send later or just the mere fact that so many want to come back and visit us and I’ll get a knock on my classroom door and a comment of appreciation or the student will come into the class and speak to my current students and with no prompting on my part, will want to say something to them that he experienced in my class that helped. Those kinds of things are to be cherished because it’s not as if the recognition that we get outside of our environment is such that it’s going to bring us added monetary benefits or anything.

Many of the interviews chose to use the word “vocation” in their description of the teaching ministry.

You wouldn't do this job, you wouldn't get into this for the pay or for the respect or for anything else in life because it is a lot of work. I think most teachers look at this with the view of teaching as a vocation. That is something they are called to do.

I think most of us that chose to work with students and young men we that what we do, our daily work, we do it because we know we've received a call and we said yes to it.

I truly believe teaching is a calling. Whether it's for the public, private, or Catholic institution, in this job you give of yourself and your soul...

And I would say that the vast majority of people approach their teaching as a vocation.

We keep saying that our faculty here is a little bit older because they've been here 20, 30 plus years and they stayed here not necessarily because they are getting a great paycheck. It is really because they find that there's a home here. They found their vocation here. I definitely did when I started.

I, for sure, know that teaching is a vocation. I'm 100% certain of that. For me, it's my ministerial work.

Questions nine and ten asks the interviewee to elaborate on the ministerial nature of teaching at Belen Jesuit: *“To what extent do you believe the administration of Belen Jesuit encourages its teachers to see their work as ministerial in nature?”* and *“What specifically does Belen Jesuit do to encourage its teachers to see their work as ministerial in nature?”* Both from the administrative and the faculty perspective, the faculty are being led to idea of the ministerial nature of teaching. Several interviewees referred to a recent faculty meeting where the first pillar of the strategic plan was discussed. It was

made clear that the Belen Jesuit takes the viewpoint of ministerial nature of teaching. To further the Catholic, Jesuit identity of the school, Belen Jesuit has resolved to hire and evaluate faculty based on the furtherance of its mission.

Being a Jesuit school makes this effort very natural for Belen Jesuit. One administrator noted,

...one of things about being a Jesuit school is that we have access to literally hundreds and hundreds of Jesuit saints who have come before us who had vocations to the sciences, to the humanities and to know language.

They went on to mention several of them by name. Many of the other interviewees mention opportunities given to faculty members at Belen Jesuit, such as Belen Jesuit participation in JSN and funding for administrators and faculty members to attend colloquiums and symposiums all across the country. Faculty members are also urged to take advantage of going on retreats with students, where some give witness talks and share their personal experiences with the students on retreat.

The interviewees were generally positive in their appraisal of Belen Jesuit's status in providing world-affirming education, but the clear majority see that some improvement that can happen in this area. However, some of the interviewees demonstrated a lack of understanding as to what world-affirming education is. Some seemed to either concentrate the "world" part of it, while not addressing the "affirming" part. One faculty member commented,

As I understand it, as Jesuit educators, we're not simply conduits of information and models of information for the students to absorb, but I also believe that through our approaches, through our conduct, we need to inculcate in our students the love, not just of learning, but to have respect for the world in which they live and to make them understand

that they need to be full participants and also ... protect God's creation.

The idea of being part of the world, participating in the world, and protecting the world is present in this comment, but the affirming aspect seems to be absent. The same could be said of this statement,

I think we have a responsibility to the global community to instill the values of Jesuit education in our students and work along the lines of Ignatian pedagogy to reach these students and challenge them to leave a mark as we educate the whole person.

A divide between the administrators and the faculty members that were interviewed is apparent when the question of whether not the teachers at Belen Jesuit know what world-affirming education is and do their best to provide it. One administrator alluded to the fact that in every classroom at Belen Jesuit has a framed copy of the Principles of Jesuit Education hanging in a prominent place. So the term is placed in front of the teachers every day, but seeing the term may not equate to understanding it or putting it into practice. The same administrator went on to say,

...it's something we speak about, those characteristics of Jesuit education, are something that is part of our formation or professional development for faculty, especially newer faculty who are being introduced to general education for the first time and they go through a three-year program to ...help immerse them in the reality of having to teach...those world-affirming values.

Two claims have been made in this statement. First, world-affirming education is something that is spoken about in the professional development of the faculty and, second, new faculty members are immersed in the idea as part of their formation in the Ordo program.

However, these claims are in stark contrast to comments made by faculty members who were interviewed. For example, “I don’t think we’ve ever been exposed to thinking about education in this kind of way and I would love to see more professional development toward that end.” From this person’s perspective there has been no exposure to the notion of world-affirming education and she/he expressed a desire to more professional development in this area. Another faculty interviewee commented,

World-affirming is not something that I, who have been here for 15 years has readily heard...I think that for the most part we hear a lot about Ignatian spirituality or things like that, but not necessarily the term world-affirming.

The administrators and the faculty members tend to agree that Belen Jesuit, at the very least, needs to do more to assist its teachers in providing world-affirming education. Many of the administrators referred to the Ordo program as something definitive the school does to assist the teachers in this regard, but they tend to agree that there is something lacking. One commented,

... the Ordo formation, which is the three-year program for incoming teachers ... which exposes them to what Jesuit is all about... We have a process of continuing formation which I agree needs to improve because there’s always room for improvement.

The same administrator also pointed to the fact that Belen Jesuit created the “Dean of Faculty” position to, “focus (their) time and attention to helping teachers become better teachers and implementing those values of Jesuit education I think is a significant step.”

In contrast, one faculty member commented, “I don’t know that they actually help us as teachers integrate that into our own classrooms.” Another stated, “I think we can do a better job of this... we don’t bring it back to God. We don’t bring it back to a sense of wonder and mystery and learning.” While both sides agree on the idea that

improvement is needed in the assistance given to teachers in providing world-affirming, they disagree on where Belen Jesuit is now in that regard.

When asked about the educational experience of current students at Belen and whether they believe that are experiencing a world-affirming education, the administration and the faculty approached their answers a similar direction. They seemed to focus mostly on the overall experience of the student, rather than what is going on in the classroom. One administrator spoke about forming the students to be “Men for Others,” the school’s liturgical practices, retreats, and service projects. Of these, this administrator commented, “I think all those things contribute significantly to these young men and understanding that that world is good, that we are good, and therefore that we have to live our lives in accordance with that goodness.” Another administrator also used the service projects as evidence that the educational experience of the students is world-affirming. They mentioned the Key Club and a beach cleanup, but nothing about what happens in the classroom.

Only one faculty geared their answer to the classroom experience of the students.

This faculty member said,

I think they are so hard-pressed by outside concerns from their parents. ...you have to get the right grades...get into the right college...you have to take that course... They get lost in those pressures... They don’t stand back and just enjoy.

Most of the time the students spend as part of the school community is in the classroom or part of the classroom experience.

The interviewees from both the administration and the faculty were generally positive when it came to idea of the teachers being encouraged to see their work as

ministry. Many alluded to a recent faculty meeting where that very idea was mentioned as a mandate for teachers. Many spoke of the opportunities afforded the faculty to grow spiritually. They specifically mentioned retreats, service projects, and having access to a spiritual counselor just for them.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up what the data collected revealed about the extent that world-affirming education takes place currently at Belen Jesuit, I would conclude that it is happening on a certain level, but it can be improved. The faculty and alumni agree that it can get better if the term “world-affirming” became as household to Belen Jesuit as “men for others,” “*ad majorem Dei gloriam*,” “*cura personalis*,” and “*magis*,”

I would also conclude that the initial claims and intuitions that I offered in the previous chapter were all confirmed by this data. For the most part it is understood that all classes are expected to be taught from a religious foundation. Belen Jesuit does, in word and sometimes in practice, acknowledge the act of teaching as a world-affirming ministry. The teachers at Belen Jesuit do see the possibility that exists for God to be made present in any classroom, at any time, and as part of any subject. Belen Jesuit is striving to provide a world-affirming education to its students. Many teachers and alumni pointed out that theology classes are more suited to operating under a world-affirming pedagogy, informed by Jesuit values, than other subjects and that is where they saw it happening more. Some of the teachers and alumni pointed out that not all teachers in all subjects see their work as a world-affirming ministry. That is why so many of the interviewees stated

that improvement is needed in the formation of teachers so that they have a proper understanding of what world-affirming education is and how to implement it.

The data also revealed that when it came to statements about the sacramental nature of teaching, there seemed to be some hesitancy on the part of many faculty members and alumni. Many more of them chose not to opine on those particular statements than on any others. With that in mind, this thesis now conducts a theological exploration of sacramentality with the hope that its connection to education, and, in particular, Jesuit education, will be made very apparent.

CHAPTER 3

World-Affirming Education and Sacramentality

While Ignatius never actually used the phrase “Finding God in All Things,” William Barry, S.J. suggests that this perspective was present in Ignatius’ *Contemplatio ad amorem*. Barry says that during this contemplation,

[The retreatant is] asking for a personal revelation of the many blessings God has given me. Ignatius does not believe he was singled out for the revelations he had because of any merit of his; everything he received he thought of as a gift. Hence he expects that anyone can ask God for such a revelation and then hope that God will respond.¹

Ignatius prepares his retreatant by making two points about love.² The first is “that love ought to be manifested in deeds rather than words.”³ He also adds two “preludes” of which the second states, “Here it will be to ask for a deep knowledge of the many blessings I have received, that I may be filled with gratitude for them, and in all things love and serve the Divine Majesty.”⁴ Ignatius then presents four points or “insights,” as Peter Fink calls them, which are to guide the contemplation. The third of these is as follows:

...to consider how God works and labors for me in all created things on the face of the earth, that is, He conducts Himself as one who labors; in the heavens, the elements, plants, fruits, flocks, etc. He gives them being, preserves them, grants them growth, sensation, etc. Then I will reflect on myself.⁵

¹Barry, *Finding God in All Things*, 133.

²Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 103

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid, 104.

According to Fink, “This is a sacramental view of the world, that everything that happens presents the creator God to God’s creatures.”⁶

From Ignatius’ perspective, this sacramental view of the world is expressed in the “Principle and Foundation” of the *Exercises*. Charles Healey describes it thusly:

...it first speaks about the basic meaning of human existence. Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God, and by means of this to save their souls. All other things on the face of the earth have been created to help human beings reach their goal...At this point Ignatius introduces the concept of *indifference*... A spirit of indifference enables a person to desire and choose only the things that truly lead to the praise, reverence, and service of God and for the end for which he or she has been created.⁷

Ignatius wanted to be sure that his retreatants, or “exercitants” as he called them, came to the *Spiritual Exercises* with the proper perspective. Ignatius states in the *Spiritual Exercises*,

Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. All other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him fulfill the end for which he is created. From this it follows that man is to use these things to the extent that they will help him attain his end. Likewise, he must rid himself of them in so far as they present him from attaining it.⁸

David Stanley, S.J. suggests that this “Principle and Foundation” “epitomizes the entire message of the *Spiritual Exercises*. The author composed this statement after most of his book was completed, in order that he might help the exercitant to make a complete

⁶Peter Fink, “Finding God in All Things: Jesuit Spirituality,” *Liturgical Ministry* Fall 2001, 208.

⁷Charles J. Healey, S.J., *The Ignatian Way: Key Aspects of Jesuit Spirituality*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 27.

⁸Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 47-48.

commitment of himself to God who is his creator.”⁹ David Fleming, S.J. adds, “Ignatius’ first principle is that all creation is a gift, coming from God and leading toward God... This means that God is *in* creation.”¹⁰ According to Peter Fink,

The Principle and Foundation proposes that men and women have been created for a purpose: to know, love, and serve God. It says further that everything created is designed to unveil the knowledge and the love of God and invites us to approach God in obedient love and service.¹¹

This Principle and Foundation can be seen to undergird the concept of world-affirming education in that it encourages teachers and students to see education as a tool to “unveil the knowledge and the love of God.”

Ignatius states in the “Principle and Foundation” that “all other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him fulfill the end for which he is created,” namely union with God. If this is so, then created things are a means to humanity’s ultimate end. Moreover, Kolvenbach describes the “radical goodness” of the world as the starting point of “world-affirming education.”¹² Hence, the theological foundation of world-affirming education lies not just in the act of creation, but also in the truth of the goodness of that creation which has the inherent capacity to reveal its Creator.

To further explore the theological notion of sacramentality which undergirds the Jesuit notion of a world-affirming education, this chapter explores the notion of

⁹David Stanley, S.J., *A Modern Scriptural Approach to the Spiritual Exercises* (Chicago: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1967), 15.

¹⁰David Fleming, S.J., *What Is Ignatian Spirituality?* (Chicago, Ill.: Loyola Press, 2008), 3. (emphasis in the original)

¹¹Peter Fink, “Finding God in All Things,” 209.

¹²Kolvenbach, *Go Forth and Preach*, 17.

sacramentality as presented by Thomas Aquinas, Karl Rahner, S.J., Thomas Groome, and Michael Himes.

THOMAS AQUINAS AND SECONDARY CAUSES

Dean Smith observed, “We live in world and an age that has largely been divested of the sacred. With the rise of science and technology human kind has found itself in less and less need of a God ‘out there.’”¹³ If one accepts Smith’s observation, then the notion of “finding God in all things” is an outlook our world is required to develop. One theological foundation for this Jesuit notion can be found in Thomas Aquinas and his explanation of secondary causes.

In his writings on God, Aquinas attempts to preserve the transcendence of God, while at the same time providing for God’s immediacy. He appeals to Augustine who claimed that there is a trace of the Trinity in all created things.

But in all creatures there is found the trace of the Trinity inasmuch as in every creature are found some things which are necessarily reduced to the divine Persons as to their cause. For every creature [1] subsists in its own being, and [2] has a form whereby it is determined to a species, and [3] has relation to something else. Therefore [1] as it is a created substance, it represents the cause and principle; and so in that manner it shows the Person of the Father, Who is the *principle from no principle*. [2] According as it has a form and species, it represents the Word, as the form of the thing made by art is from the conception [mental word] of the craftsman. [3] According as it has relation of order, it represents the Holy Ghost, inasmuch as He is love, because

¹³Dean Smith, “The Sacramental Life: Towards an Integrated Christian Vision,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 50 no 2, (Fall 2015), 186.

the order of the effect to something else is from the will of the Creator.¹⁴

For Aquinas, this establishes that each of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity can be found within the nature of all created things. He continues,

For He brought things into being in order that His goodness might be communicated to creatures, and be represented by them; and because His goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, He produced many and diverse creatures that what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another.¹⁵

God cannot be adequately represented by one created thing, but rather by the collection of all created things – the world. As Roger Haight comments, “the creating God is immediately present to creation.”¹⁶ To establish this, Aquinas argues that God, the primary cause, is made present to His creatures through secondary causes. Petr Dvořák explains, “The Angelic Doctor speaks of secondary causes acting as instruments in the power of God, the principle cause.”¹⁷ According to Denis Edwards,

Aquinas holds that God is present to all things at their most interior level, enabling them to exist and act at every moment... All things exist only as created by God *ex nihilo* at every moment. They depend on God entirely for their existence and action at every moment... Aquinas calls all the interacting causes found in the empirical world *secondary* causes. God, then, is the primary cause, the Creator always

¹⁴Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa of the Summa: The Essential Philosophical Passages of St. Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theological Edited and Explained for Beginners*, ed. Peter Kreeft (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 196.

¹⁵Ibid, 204.

¹⁶Haight, “A Theology for the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola,” 163.

¹⁷Petr Dvořák, “The Concurrentism of Thomas Aquinas: Divine Causation and Human Freedom,” *Philosophia* 41 (2013), 620.

acting providentially in and through created causes. It is by God's power that every other power acts.¹⁸

Aquinas tries to avoid an interventionist concept of God or the idea that God directly controls every action of every being at every moment. Rather God empowers creation to create its own causes and in doing so demonstrates His own power. But the causes that come about within creation would not be able to cause anything if they did not receive that ability from the primary cause. Therefore, this ability to initiate causation reflects the primary cause. According to Dvořák, “the divine cause is said to ... move or apply the secondary cause's power to action. Moreover, the secondary causes is said to ... act in virtue of the divine power as its instrument.”¹⁹

Aquinas further develops this notion of God's presence in creation through his doctrine of participation. Extending his consideration to divine omnipresence, in the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas states, “Since it evidently belongs to the infinite to be present everywhere, and in all things, we now consider whether this belongs to God.” Thus, he asks, “Whether God is in all things?” His response provides a further undergirding to the concept of sacramentality:

God is in all things; not, indeed, as part of their essence, nor as an accident, but as an agent is present to that upon which it works. For an agent must be joined to that wherein it acts immediately and touch it by its power.... Now since God is very being by His own essence, created being must be His proper effect; as to ignite is the proper effect of fire. Now God causes this effect in things not only when they first begin to be, but as long as they are preserved in being; as light is caused in the air by the sun as long as the air remains

¹⁸Denis Edwards, “Toward a Theology of Divine Action: William R. Stoeger, S.J., on the Laws of Nature,” *Theological Studies* 73 no. 3 (2015), 499.

¹⁹Dvořák, “The Concurrentism of Thomas Aquinas,” 618.

illuminated. Therefore, as long as a thing has being, God must be present to it, according to its mode of being. But being is innermost in each thing and most fundamentally inherent in all things since it is formal in respect of everything found in a thing, as was shown above. Hence it must be that God is in all things, and innermostly.²⁰

Aquinas further explains God's omnipresence in all creation in this way:

Now... in some way God is in every place; and this is to be everywhere. First, as He is in all things giving them being, power and operation; so He is in every place as giving it existence and locative power.... and God fills every place... indeed, by the very fact that He gives being to the things that fill every place, He Himself fills every place.²¹

KARL RAHNER AND TRANSCENDENT KNOWLEDGE THROUGH CATEGORICAL REALITY

Jennifer Slater observed that Karl Rahner "insists that God is experienced not just as a separate category of religious experience and is to be found not only in religious moments, but in all moments and 'in all things.'"²² If one were to rely solely on Aquinas' notion of God's use of secondary causes, this could lead to the idea of God's absence from the world. God would then be an all-powerful, yet distant being that oversees, but does not necessary participate in His creation. Rahner explains the problem:

God's immediacy, his being mediated, his presence and his absence, all these are variable notions because spirit as transcendence is not a characteristic of every existent in the world. But here our primary concern is the statement of Thomas just mentioned. If it is not to be made innocuous, the statement says that God causes the world, but not really

²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia.8.1, translated by the Father of the English Dominican Province, 1947, <https://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/FP/FP008.html>.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Ia.8.2.

²² Jennifer Slater, "Direct Experience of God': A Quest for Refinement and Illumination in Christian Faith and Practice," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 36 (July 2010), 11

in the world. It says that the chain of causality has its basis in him, but not by his activity he inserts himself as a link in this chain of causes as one cause among them.²³

That which is solely transcendent, by definition, cannot be immanent. Yet, Christianity states that God is simultaneously transcendent and immanent in creation. Thus, Rahner states, “The dilemma of the ‘immanence’ or ‘transcendence’ of God must be overcome without sacrificing either the one or the other concern.”²⁴ He continues, “If then there is nevertheless to be an immediacy of God to us ... then this immediacy both in itself and in its categorical, historical objectification must be embedded in this world to begin with.”²⁵ Therefore, the immanence of God is not something to be found in the activity of the world per se, but within the very existence of the world. This conclusion reflects Aquinas’ doctrine of participation, namely, that anything which possesses being participates in Being itself and, conversely, Being itself is present to it “innermostly.” By virtue of the fact that the world’s being makes God immanent, anything that proceeds from the world’s being would carry with it that immanence also.

There is genuine mediation of immediacy with regard to God. And when according to the understanding of Christian faith the most radical and absolutely immediate self-communication of God is his very own being given to us, namely, in the immediate vision of God as the fulfillment of the finite spirit in grace, this most radical immediacy is still mediated in a certain sense by the finite subject experiencing it, and thereby also experiencing itself.²⁶

²³ Karl Rahner, S.J., *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 86.

²⁴Ibid, 87.

²⁵Ibid, 86-87.

²⁶Ibid, 83-84.

According to Rahner, “This immediacy allows God really to be God even in and through his true self-communication, to be a God who does not give some numinous, mysterious gift which is different from himself, but who gives himself.”²⁷

In Rahner’s epistemology there is a distinction between what he calls “transcendental” and “categorical” knowledge. Thomas O’Meara defines Rahner’s notion of transcendental knowledge as “the horizon against which the things – trees, clouds, buildings – stand. Things and objects appear in a transcendental background.”²⁸ According to Rahner, “The infinite horizon, which is the term of transcendence and which opens us to unlimited possibilities of encounter... cannot itself be given a name.”²⁹ In contrast, categorical knowledge is our “sense knowledge.”³⁰ According to Rahner, God exists in a transcendental reality and yet is made known to us in our categorical reality. Hence, as Rahner explains, “Transcendental experience, even when and where it is mediated through an actual categorical object, is always divine experience in the midst of everyday life.”³¹ All experience leads us back to the originator of all that is. One encounters God in all that is because all comes from God. For Rahner, this immanence of God is not something that is merely possible or simply something that one could choose whether or not to notice. Rather it is the very heart of Christianity.

²⁷Ibid, 125.

²⁸Ibid, 42.

²⁹Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 61.

³⁰O’Meara, *God in the World*, 44.

³¹Karl Rahner, *The Spirit in the Church*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1985), 15.

For me, therefore, the true and sole center of Christianity is the real self-communication of God to creation in God's innermost reality and glory. It is to profess the most improbable truth, namely that God in God's very self with infinite reality and glory, with holiness, freedom, and love can really and without any holding back enter the creatureliness of our existence.³²

Theoretically, the immanence of God can be observed by those open to considering it. Just as "finding God in all things" is the hopeful perspective of the exercitant of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the observation of the immanence of God is contingent upon "the moment I experience myself as a transcendental subject in my orientation to God and accept it... then within this subjective, transcendental relationship to God this [experience] receives objectively a quite definite and positive significance."³³ Thus, Thomas O'Meara concludes, "Through a lifetime, a person searches for meaning, hope, and fulfillment, and, too, the love of God encounters each man and woman in all aspects of life, not just in religion."³⁴

THOMAS GROOME AND THE "SACRAMENTAL PRINCIPLE"

According to theologian Bernard Cooke, "'sacrament' is certainly one of the most basic notions in Christianity."³⁵ He continues, "For centuries now, the principal meaning of

³²Karl Rahner, "Experiences of a Catholic Theologian," trans. Declan Marmon, S.M. and Gesa Thiessen, *Theological Studies* 61 (2000), 7-8.

³³Ibid, 88.

³⁴Thomas O'Meara, *God in the World*, (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 2007), 56.

³⁵Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2011), 6.

‘sacrament’ for most Christians has focused on certain ritualistic actions (baptism, eucharist, etc.), actions that are considered specifically ‘religious.’”³⁶ However, Thomas Groome, as well as many other theologians, contends that the term has a much greater breadth than the common usage Cooke observes. Rather, the seven sacraments fall within a much broader theological domain called sacramentality. “Understood within the sacramentality of life in the world, the seven sacraments are sacred symbols that mediate God’s grace in Jesus with heightened effect.”³⁷ Kevin Irwin explains that “The key that unlocks and unleashes the depth and value of any liturgy and all sacramental celebration is *sacramentality*.”³⁸ Moreover, as John Macquarrie states,

Perhaps the goal of all sacramentality and sacramental theology is to make the things of this world so transparent that in them and through them we know God’s presence and activity in our very midst, and so experience his grace.³⁹

Groome asserts that sacramentality is inseparable from Catholicism. He claims, “Nothing is more significant to what *makes us Catholic* than the sacramental principle. It epitomizes a Catholic outlook on life in the world; if allowed only one word to describe Catholic imagination, we’d have to say *sacramental*.”⁴⁰ According to Kevin Irwin,

By ‘sacramental’ I also mean that God is both revealed and yet also remains hidden in this world... Sacramentality

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷ Thomas Groome, “What Makes Us Catholic: The Sacramental Principle,” *C21 Resources* 21 (Spring 2012), 4.

³⁸Kevin Irwin, “A Sacramental World – Sacramentality As The Primary Language for Sacraments,” *Worship* 76 no. 3 (May 2002), 197. (emphasis in the original)

³⁹John Macquarrie, *A Guide to the Sacraments*, (London: SCM Press, 1997), 4.

⁴⁰ Groome, “What Makes Us Catholic: The Sacramental Principle,” 4. (emphasis in the original).

emphasizes how God is discoverable here and now; it also leads us to yearn for the fullness of our experience of God in eternity.⁴¹

According to Groome, “The sacramental principle proposes that everything in our life/world can be such a sign. In the classic phrase of Ignatius of Loyola, Christians are invited ‘to see God in all things.’”⁴² Because of this,

*...God is present to humankind and we respond to God’s grace through the ordinary and every day of life in the world. In other words God’s Spirit and humankind work together through nature and creation, through culture and society, through our minds and bodies, hearts and souls, through our labors and efforts, creativity and generativity, in the depth of our own being and in community with others, through the events and experiences that come our way, through what we are doing and what is “going on” around us, through everything and anything in life. Life in the world is sacramental – the medium of God’s outreach and of human response.*⁴³

In a similar vein, Dean Smith asserts in his article, “The Sacramental Life” that

the divine is at the center of material reality and does not enter our reality from outside. Within this framework, awareness of the unfolding of the divine at the center of life becomes the practical work of the Christian. Life itself takes on a sacramental quality.⁴⁴

Moreover, Michael Mayne states, “Not only does God like [matter] but he clothes himself in it. It is one of his languages.”⁴⁵

⁴¹Irwin, “A Sacramental World,” 203.

⁴²Groome, “What Makes Us Catholic: The Sacramental Principle,” 4.

⁴³ Thomas Groome, *What Makes Us Catholic: Eight Gifts for Life*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 84. (emphasis in the original)

⁴⁴Smith, “A Sacramental Life,” 187.

⁴⁵Michael Mayne, *This Sunrise of Wonder: Letters for the Journey* (London: Fount, 1995), 69.

Sacramentality, therefore, is not just a notion within the theological realm study; it is a chosen worldview. Groome chooses the word “cosmology”⁴⁶ to describe it.

The Greek word *cosmos* means “ordered universe” and is the opposite to *chaos*. Clearly, those early sages began their study assuming that “the world” *has* an order to it, a design that the human mind can comprehend.⁴⁷

Sacramentality offers the perspective that that the world is ordered to back to its Creator. The Creator has left clues within creation to lead creation back to Himself. Humanity is left to find them, interpret them, and follow them. Irwin adds, “This world is the locus of where the incarnate God is experienced.”⁴⁸ David Brown and Ann Loades add, “God can come sacramentally close to this world and vouchsafe experiences of himself through the material.”⁴⁹

Groome notes that this worldview carries with it two corollaries for the beholder. First is the idea that we live in a good and gracious world. Because a “Catholic Christian world-view comes down to the side that nothing God has made, makes, or causes to be made is essentially evil[,] [our] life-world is basically good.”⁵⁰ Furthermore, “The world is *gracious* because God’s *grace* takes the initiative. This means that the Spirit is ever abroad in the world with loving intent, working prior to and more generously than all human efforts.”⁵¹

⁴⁶Groome, *What Makes Us Catholic: Eight Gifts for Life*, 78.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Irwin, “A Sacramental World,” 199.

⁴⁹David Brown and Ann Loades (eds), *The Sense of the Sacramental: Movement and Measure in Art and Music, Place and Time*, (London: SPCK, 1995), 8.

⁵⁰Groome, *What Makes Us Catholic: Eight Gifts for Life*, 80.

⁵¹Ibid.

Secondly, this worldview asks the beholder to accept that life is meaningful and worthwhile.⁵² According to Groome,

All of us try to find or create meaning in our lives; that's our human disposition. At the same time, we find ourselves born into a world already chock-full of meaning. We discover here – in place long before we arrived – a meaningful world of language, culture, and society.⁵³

All human beings, whether they are believers or not, seek to establish meaning for their lives. Some do so by piling up achievements, accolades, and recognition so that when their short time on this earth is completed they can be remembered and essentially live forever. Others seek to fill their lives with luxury and wealth so that every moment of this limited existence can be savored and lived to the full. For others, meaning is found in simple survival; in overcoming the unjust conditions in which their lives began. There are numerous other situations that can describe the human search for meaning, but ironically, if one wants to hold a sacramental worldview, they will discover that their life has meaning before any attempt on their part to find or create it.

MICHAEL HIMES AND “BEHOLDERS OF GRACE”

Michael Himes echoes the sentiment of Thomas Groome regarding the sacramental principle. He suggests that the sacramental principle is what makes Catholicism Catholic.

The *sacramental principle* means that what is always and everywhere the case must be noticed, accepted, and celebrated somewhere sometime. What is always and everywhere true must be brought to our attention and be

⁵²Groome, *What Makes Us Catholic: Eight Gifts for Life*, 81.

⁵³Ibid.

embraced (or rejected) in some concrete experience at some particular time and place.⁵⁴

In this claim, Himes is making the observation that what happens to people all the time or what people do all the time often goes unnoticed. He used a personal experience of having Bell's palsy to make an analogy. His condition made it impossible for him to blink his left eye. He had to physically pull his eyelid down from time to time in order for that eye to produce moisture. He had to tape it shut when he slept. He had never given any thought to blinking before that episode, but because he was unable to do so for a time, it was forced into his consciousness. Himes asserts,

What we do all the time we seldom, if ever, think about. What is always there gets little or no attention. For example, we never think about the oxygen in the room until the air starts to get stale. We do not think about our heart beating. Although if it stopped, we would notice as we slumped to the floor.⁵⁵

According to Himes, the same may be said of the presence of the grace of God; the challenge is to see grace in the ordinary. For Himes, this is the key to sacramental living.

We require occasions when grace is called to our attention, when it is made concrete for us, when that which is always the case is made present in such a way that we cannot help but notice it and may either accept or reject it and, if we accept it, celebrate it.⁵⁶

Himes defines sacrament in this context as

...any person, place thing, or event, any sight, sound, taste, touch, or smell, that causes us to notice the love that supports

⁵⁴Michael Himes, "Finding God in All Things, 91.

⁵⁵Ibid, 99

⁵⁶Ibid.

all that exists, that undergirds your being and mine and the being of everything about us... Everything is potentially sacramental.⁵⁷

He continues,

For anything – any person, place, thing, event, any sight, taste, touch, smell – anything that exists *can* be sacramental *if* one views it in its rootedness in the grace of God. So, how many sacraments are there? How many things are there in the universe?⁵⁸

As a result, Himes sees education as sacramental.

...anything that awakens, enlivens, and expands the imagination, opens the vision, and enriches the sensitivity of any human being is a religious act. Although we may not use this language, education is or can be training in sacramental beholding.⁵⁹

He further discusses this connection through the idea of asceticism which he defines as “a training to see reality.”⁶⁰ Himes suggests that, like any type of training, asceticism is about self-discipline. “The Catholic conviction is that if one sees what it there to be seen, one will discover grace, the love that undergirds all that exists. The ascetic beholds the omnipresence of grace.”⁶¹

Himes suggests that sacramentality also enters into the study of the sciences.

I suggest that there is a profoundly sacramental dimension to all the sciences because they are all training in intellectual self-discipline. After all, we often call our fields of study

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Himes, “Living Conversion,” 7.

⁵⁹Himes, “Finding God in All Things,” 100.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid, 101.

disciplines. When we study anything, we ‘discipline ourselves.’⁶²

As a Catholic educator, Himes recognizes that, “any and every field of study is ultimately religious in nature if everything rests on grace and humanity is shared with God in Christ.”⁶³

Is it not true in every field, whether we teach philosophy, chemistry, literature or finance, that we strive to lead people to see what is there to be seen? I am suggesting that the Catholic sacramental principle supports this with the conviction that what is there to be seen in its depths is grace. Consequently, to teach any discipline or field is a holy activity. All teaching can produce sacramental beholders, even when the teachers do not know that this is what they are doing. And I suggest to you that sacramental beholders are what Catholic universities and colleges are supposed to be producing.⁶⁴

From this sacramental perspective we conclude that, “grace is here. What is needed is someone to see it. What is wanted is the beholder.”⁶⁵

SACRAMENTALITY AND WORLD-AFFIRMING EDUCATION

Sacramentality, the foundation of the Ignatian worldview of “finding God in all things,” has become embedded in Jesuit educational pedagogy. Kolvenbach makes this quite clear when he provides a “schematic outline” which demonstrates exactly how the “Ignatian World-View” of sacramentality is presented within “Jesuit Education.” Therefore, for a

⁶²Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁶³Ibid, 102.

⁶⁴Himes, “Living Conversation,” 8.

⁶⁵Ibid, 7.

school to claim to be “unabashedly Jesuit” it should have an environment where the sacramentality of the world can be readily experienced by its students.

Michael Edwards, in his article “Ignatian Spirituality, Collaboration, and Development: A Reflection from an Educational Perspective,” points out that the Second Vatican Council, in *Gravissimum educationis* (Declaration on Christian Education) forwards this idea of sacramentality. Edwards comments that the document “states that the distinctiveness of the Catholic school is found in the relationship between its religious dimension in the educational climate and the personal development of each student in the tension between culture and gospel.”⁶⁶

Edwards goes on to bring Ignatian spirituality into the discussion of education. He states thusly:

If teachers are to use the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm successfully, they need not only to be only sensitive to their own experience, attitudes, and opinions but also to be suitably inducted into the characteristics of Jesuit education – especially ongoing formation, including spiritual formation – since, it seems to me, these are integrally bound into the whole educational enterprise.⁶⁷

Edwards continues by discussing the role of the teacher in lives of students from an Ignatian perspective. He writes thusly:

All too often the students whom we teach will have a limited understanding as to where God may be found, which in their minds may be confined to church or formal prayer. Teachers are in the privileged position of helping students authentically to interpret ways of finding the presence of God in all that we do.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Michael Edwards, “Ignatian Spirituality, Collaboration, and Development: A Reflection from an Educational Perspective,” *The Way* 49, no 3 (July 2010), 12.

⁶⁷Ibid, 16.

⁶⁸Ibid, 17.

Edwards says the *Characteristics of Jesuit Education* “makes connections between the characteristics of Jesuit education and the spiritual vision of Ignatius.”⁶⁹ Edwards sees this connection as sacramental in nature.

This theme of finding the presence of God in all things and experiencing the love of God working in our lives, indeed every moment and opportunity, is clearly sacramental. It makes sense to develop this way of thinking as a model for understanding how the school community may also be considered as ‘sacramental’, and as a way of realizing this powerful dimension which is distinctive to Catholic schools.⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

The notion of sacramentality presented in the theologies of Thomas Aquinas, Karl Rahner, Thomas Groome, Michael Himes, and others is something that goes hand in hand with the Jesuit pedagogy of a world-affirming education. In order to enhance world-affirming education grounded in the sacramental principle at Belen Jesuit, the next chapter will introduce the notion of teaching as a sacramental act. This approach means that every teacher in every class can mediate God through the material they are presenting to the students. By inviting their students to see God in their material, they will be offering their students a world-affirming education.

⁶⁹Ibid, 19.

⁷⁰Ibid, 18.

CHAPTER 4

Teaching as a Sacramental Act

Chapter Three established that a sacramental worldview creates the proper setting for world-affirming education. Now that the setting has been established, the act must follow. This chapter will explore the act of teaching as sacramental and what must be done in that act in order for the education it produces to be world-affirming.

Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore gives a detailed description of teaching as a sacramental act in her book by the same name. According to Mullino Moore, “Teaching needs to be re-envisioned as sacred teaching – mediating the Holy, ”¹ in other words, as sacramental. Mullino Moore suggests six acts that will make teaching sacramental in nature and aid teachers in using their position as leaders and guides of their classrooms to lead their students to the good.

TEACHING AS SACRAMENTAL IN SIX ACTS

“Expect the Unexpected”

The first of Mullino’s six acts is “Expect the Unexpected.” This act is rooted in faith as well as in mystery. It proceeds from the belief that no one is beyond hope for positive change. “Expecting the unexpected has to do with traveling with others on the long journey of faith, expecting surprises along the way.”² As with all of her acts, Mullino Moore sees power in expecting the unexpected. She goes on to define three

¹Mullino Moore, *Teaching as a Sacrament Act*, 5.

²Ibid, 31.

powers in particular. The first power she calls the “power of surprise.”³ She defines it as “seeking a constant flow of inspiration and cultivating optimism.”⁴ The second is called the “power of engaging with God in good times and bad.”⁵ Mullino Moore uses the example of Moses to make her point. She reminds us of Exodus 33:12-23 when Moses had just destroyed the tablets of the Law after he witnesses the idolatry of his people. He goes back up the mountain to be with God during a bad time. Moses is permitted to see the glory of God, but only as it passes by. He sees it again but only after the new tablets were forged and God made his covenant with Moses and the people.⁶ The third and final power is called the “power of God’s response to the world.”⁷ Mullino Moore suggests, “God listens and responds with direct action and covenant-making,”⁸ again depicted in the story of Moses.

Mullino Moore also suggests several educational practices in order to set her acts into motion. For expecting the unexpected, she proposes four practices that are truly sacramental in nature. The first practice is called “engage with God and creation.”⁹ She says, *“To engage with God is to seek God’s movements in every ordinary and extraordinary moment of every day. To engage with creation to be awake to its pains and*

³Ibid, 43.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid, 44.

⁶Ibid 44-45.

⁷Ibid, 45.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid, 56.

joys.”¹⁰ The second practice is to “search for wonder.”¹¹ For Mullino Moore, this means “*searching actively for wonder and reflecting upon wonders that come unexpected.* The hermeneutic of wonder is a discipline of spiritual searching, to be practiced, whether or not we are inspired.”¹² The third is to “practice expectancy.”¹³ Mullino Moore draws a comparison between this practice and the season of Advent. She says, “As Advent is a season of waiting, so every educational event and every day can be a time of awakening and awaiting God’s incarnation in the world.”¹⁴ Finally, the fourth practice is to “practice hope.”¹⁵ Mullino Moore suggests, “This practice responds to God’s sacramental presence in the sacraments and in creation... If the source of hope is God, we can cultivate hope by inviting people to *engage with the God of promises.*”¹⁶

“Remember the Dismembered”

The second act of sacramental teaching is “Remember the Dismembered.” Members of every community can become isolated from the whole for many different reasons. It is important to help students “respond to the world” even in its “woundedness.”¹⁷ God suffers too. God suffers in the damaging of creation and in the Passion of His Son. Every

¹⁰Ibid, 56 (emphasis in the original).

¹¹Ibid, 59.

¹²Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹³Ibid, 61.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid, 63.

¹⁶Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹⁷Ibid, 65.

student was, is, or will be wounded in some way; no wound is too small or insignificant. “For people of all ages, remembering brings to light the tragic dimensions of life. Tragedy and suffering thus demand theological reflection and stir strong affirmations about the sacred.”¹⁸

The powers associated with “remembering the dismembered” begin with the “power of releasing terrifying memories.”¹⁹ Mullino Moore says, “...it is powerful because it breaks forced silence, releasing people to integrate horrific parts of life into the whole.”²⁰ She continues with the “power of uncovering hidden hurts.”²¹ This is defined as “*revealing painful memories beneath the surface that shape the social fabric.*”²² Mullino Moore concludes “that people *need* to know hidden hurts, thus need education that remembers.”²³ The third power is called the “power of taking time.”²⁴ Mullino Moore comments, “Remembered tragedy cannot be hurried. If Jesus could not, in his lifetime, bring the reign of peace and justice in the world, why do we expect that ourselves?”²⁵ The fourth and final power drawn from remembering the dismembered is the “power of memory for repentance and reconstruction.”²⁶ Mullino Moore suggests that

¹⁸Ibid, 74.

¹⁹Ibid, 67.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid (emphasis in the original).

²³Ibid, 68 (emphasis in the original).

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid, 69.

there is “the need for remembering that embraces more than personal memory; it must also embrace the communal memory of violence perpetrated by ordinary people, thus evoking hope for repentance and reconciliation.”²⁷

Mullino Moore suggests four education practices in which “Remembering the Dismembered” can be applied. They all revolve around the idea of “Teaching through Memory.”²⁸

The natural temptation is to repress or deny tragedy; however, many leaders in global healing have developed countercultural alternatives, encouraging people to remember for the sake of repairing the world. In crafting educational practices, we reflect on some of these saints, especially as they inform practices of love, truth-telling, mourning , and reconciliation.²⁹

The first practice suggested in called “Practice Love: Listening and Empathizing.”³⁰ Mullino Moore describes the cultivation of love in religious education as “*compassion for others and concern for their well-being. Compassion represents ‘feeling with’ others, including suffering with them.*”³¹ Once again, she suggests four practical ways to practice love that include the actions of listening and empathizing. She says, “*educators are urged to cultivate love and nonviolence so that people can know God*

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid 79.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid (emphasis in the original).

more fully and prepare themselves to meet sorrow with compassion, and injustice with active work for justice.”³² The practical ways suggested to educators are:

- *Develop empathy with biblical texts*
- *Develop empathy with the creators of historic and contemporary works*
- *Listen intently to one another in the learning community*
- *Practice mirroring and other forms of empathic listening*³³

The second practice suggested is “Practice Truth-Telling.”³⁴ Mullino Moore suggests that

*Religious educators need to engage people with life’s messiness – struggles and pain, alongside survival and transformation. Teachers will find natural opportunities and create others, encouraging people to name and analyze tragedy – past and present – and to see the destruction and transformation that has emerged from it.*³⁵

She concludes that “truth-telling about tragic realities creates transitional space through which people can move toward justice and freedom. Dismemberment is not an end in itself, yet moving *beyond* hatred and fear requires courage to face dismemberment and learn from it.”³⁶

The third practice is called “Practice Mourning and Repenting – Making Space for Forgiving.”³⁷ Mullino Moore defines mourning and repenting as “*the acts of grieving*

³²Ibid, 80 (emphasis in the original).

³³Ibid, 80 – 81 (emphasis in the original).

³⁴Ibid, 81.

³⁵Ibid, 82 (emphasis in the original).

³⁶Ibid, 83 (emphasis in the original).

³⁷Ibid.

the destruction of life and turning away from perspectives and practices that contribute to that destruction.”³⁸ She suggests three intentional practices to aide in this process:

- *Create spaces for people to express sorrow, ritualize mourning, and pray.*
- *Deliberate hard questions regarding the relation of mourning, repentance, and forgiveness.*
- *Draw upon historic and global liturgies to create rituals for your community’s mourning, repentance, and forgiveness.*³⁹

The fourth and final practice suggested is “Practice Reconciliation with the Past.”⁴⁰ Mullino Moore defines this as “*a movement toward honest acceptance of painful realities and their legacy, for good and for ill.*”⁴¹ She suggests three approaches that can help in this process. The first of these is to “preserve memory.”⁴² This is defined as “*honoring the memory of forebears – those who lost their lives and dignity to dismemberment, and those who survived, even thrived, in spite of oppression.*”⁴³ The second is to “preserve and visit sacred memorials.”⁴⁴ Mullino Moore defines this as “*preserving and making sacred pilgrimages to sacred places that memorialize tragedy, like the Garden of Gethsemane or Golgotha.*”⁴⁵ The third and final is “Reshape Tradition

³⁸Ibid (emphasis in the original).

³⁹Ibid, 84 (emphasis in the original).

⁴⁰Ibid, 85.

⁴¹Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁴⁴Ibid, 86.

⁴⁵Ibid (emphasis in the original).

and Religious Practice in Light of Tragedy.”⁴⁶ This is defined as “*critiquing and reforming theological traditions and religious practices in light of those realities.*”⁴⁷

“*Seek Reversals*”

The third act of sacramental teaching calls the educator to “Seek Reversals.” Mullino Moore says that this about “education that upsets the world, probes beneath boredom to big questions, and searches beyond the obvious for meaning and direction.”⁴⁸ Mullino Moore finds power in the seeking of reversals. She expresses that power in three distinct ways. The first is the “Power of Reshaping Relations with the past.”⁴⁹ This is “*the power to draw strength, courage, and redirection from the past, as well as to find an anchor in storms.*”⁵⁰ She continues, “People look to the past for norms, yet the fluid relation between past and present allows people to reconstruct new norms and live in changing seas.”⁵¹

The second power is the “Power of Transformed Lives.”⁵² This is the “*transformation of human lives through reversal living over time.*”⁵³ According to Mullino Moore, “Reversal living has to do with entering into that ambiguity and discerning as well as possible the response to which God is calling, knowing that God’s

⁴⁶Ibid, 87.

⁴⁷Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁴⁸Ibid, 91.

⁴⁹Ibid, 92.

⁵⁰Ibid (emphasis in the original)

⁵¹Ibid, 93.

⁵²Ibid, 94.

⁵³Ibid (emphasis in the original).

pull might upset normal patterns and assumptions.”⁵⁴ The third power is the “Power of Transformed Thinking.”⁵⁵ This is “*the result of probing beneath the surface and considering alternative perspectives.*”⁵⁶

Once again, Mullino Moore suggests four educational practices that will enable educators to teach through reversals. The first she calls “Practice Undercover Investigation.”⁵⁷ This is “*reclaiming lost traditions, including texts, rituals, theological ideas, and other expressions of faith.*”⁵⁸ She further describes this as discovering “what is missing or minimized in the tradition..., what is missing or condemned by dominant interpretation, what biases persist in the tradition and common interpretations of it.”⁵⁹

The second practice is to “Pose Questions.”⁶⁰ Mullino Moore suggests that in order for this practice to be effective, teachers should cultivate interest, cultivate suspicion, and seek sources of emancipation. For “cultivating interest,”⁶¹ she suggests asking the students “*what responses they have to a particular text, belief, or practice – How do they interpret it at first glance? How do they imagine others interpreting it? What do they hope it does not mean?*”⁶² The next step is to ask the students “*what they really*

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁵⁷Ibid, 108.

⁵⁸Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁵⁹Ibid, 108-109.

⁶⁰Ibid, 110.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid, 111 (emphasis in the original).

believe about God and why – What beliefs would be hardest to let go? What Christian practices are most central? What difference does any of this make?”⁶³

For “cultivating suspicion”⁶⁴ she suggests inviting students “*to ask difficult, even heretical, questions of the Christian tradition and Christian community.*”⁶⁵ She describes her vision for “seek sources of emancipation”⁶⁶ thus:

The vision here is prophetic education that prepares people to seek and practice emancipation, and to work toward the freedom and well-being of creation... The educational search also needs to be expansive toward all God’s creation, concerned with people, creatures, and land beyond one’s own community.⁶⁷

The third practice for “seeking reversals” is to “Practice Imagination.”⁶⁸ To accomplish this, Mullino Moore states that students be encouraged to “take the role of others”⁶⁹ and “imagine alternative futures.”⁷⁰ She says of the former, “Taking on the role of others is not necessarily agreeing with the other person or community. It is important, however, for learning the ways of the world, for seeing beneath the surface, and for discerning new possibilities.”⁷¹ She calls the latter “resurrection work”⁷² which she

⁶³Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁶⁴Ibid

⁶⁵Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁶⁶Ibid, 112.

⁶⁷Ibid, 113.

⁶⁸Ibid, 114.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid, 115.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

describes as “*preparing a community to die to the old and be reborn to God’s New Creation.*”⁷³

The fourth and final education practice suggested for “seeking reversals” is “practice parabolic-paradoxical thinking.”⁷⁴ Mullino Moore defines this as an invitation for people to “*search for meaning and direction beyond obvious and ‘taken for granted’ realities.*”⁷⁵ To put this practice into action, she suggests that teachers “empower people to encounter parables and paradox”⁷⁶ and “engage people with artistry and metaphor.”⁷⁷ For the former she suggests that people “*gather information, comprehend common patterns of thinking, and then seek subversive reversals in God’s life with creation.*”⁷⁸ For the latter she says,

Analogies and metaphors convey realities that are inexpressible in direct language... This simple educational practice of parabolic thinking generates new insights and opens the way for continued alertness to parables and paradoxes in the course of living.⁷⁹

“Give Thanks”

The fourth act of sacramental teaching is to “Give Thanks.” Mullino Moore is clear that thanksgiving is usually associated with “happy, carefree times”⁸⁰ but the reality

⁷³Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁷⁴Ibid, 116.

⁷⁵Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid, 118.

⁷⁸Ibid, 116 – 117 (emphasis in the original).

⁷⁹Ibid, 118 – 119.

⁸⁰Ibid, 121.

is that “thanksgiving is a spirit of gratitude even when life is tough; an ability to see God’s gifts even when they are not obvious; and an ability to give thanks as a discipline of appreciation for the bounties of life.”⁸¹

Just as in seeking reversals, Mullino Moore finds power in giving thanks. There is the “power of shaping a grateful spirit.”⁸² She describes this as “*a way of being that is not fully determined by external circumstances...* A spirituality of thankfulness encourages people to practice thankfulness, even when they do not feel it.”⁸³ There is also the “power of drawing goodness from tragedy and despair.”⁸⁴ She comments that “in times of despair...people are often moved to acts of heroism, and also to overflowing gratitude for the heroism and generosity of others... In times of personal failure, people can be...awakened to gratitude.”⁸⁵

There is also “power of mutuality with God and God’s bounty.”⁸⁶ This is “*the power to receive from and respond to God’s acts of love, and thus to open to God’s ongoing work of love.*”⁸⁷ Finally, there is the “power of being washed in Divine Presence.”⁸⁸ For this Mullino Moore appeals to Thomas Merton. He “had a sense of how

⁸¹Ibid, 123.

⁸²Ibid, 124.

⁸³Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁸⁴Ibid, 125.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁸⁸Ibid, 126.

powerful this relationship was, urging novices to begin prayer with a sense of union with God. He believed that the relation with God would then guide their words.”⁸⁹

Mullino Moore goes on to suggest three educational practices to cultivate “giving thanks” in the classroom. The first of these is to “practice trust.”⁹⁰ She says that “teaching trust is *inspiring and guiding people to trust that God will act, God will call forth, empower, and be thankful for our action.*”⁹¹ The second is to “search for creation’s bounties and spread gratitude.”⁹² She says that “to do this is to embody a hermeneutic of thanksgiving, looking at the world with gratitude in one’s soul and inviting others to do the same.”⁹³ The third and final practice is to “practice generosity.”⁹⁴ This is “*giving of oneself to the learning community and engaging with the community in generous actions within and beyond itself.*”⁹⁵

This act of thanksgiving is particularly pertinent to Jesuit education. As in many Jesuit schools, Belen has made *The Examen* part of the daily routine since St. Ignatius placed great emphasis on praying *The Examen*. The very first point of *The Examen* is “to render thanks to God for the favors we have received.”⁹⁶ The prayer begins by placing us in a spirit or disposition of thanksgiving. Therefore, the act of “Giving Thanks” in

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid, 141.

⁹¹Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁹²Ibid, 145.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid, 147.

⁹⁵Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁹⁶Mottola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 53.

teaching fits very well with Jesuit spirituality. It also fits very well with the daily routine of Belen.

“Nourishing New Life”

The fifth act of sacramental teaching is to “Nourish New Life.” The idea of nourishing life comes with the idea of journeying with students and not so much being in command over them. Mullino Moore suggests the story of Ruth as one that can resonate this sentiment. Naomi, being the matriarch of the family could have cast Ruth aside and indeed tries to do so. But Ruth insists, “Do not press me to go back and abandon you! Wherever you go, I will go, wherever you lodge I will lodge. Your people will be my people and Your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there be buried.”⁹⁷ Mullino Moore comments, “To say that teaching has to do with nourishing life is to emphasize the commitment of teachers and learners to live in community. Such teaching draws from the promises of life in Ruth’s story.”⁹⁸

There are four “powers” that come from “nourishing life.” The first of these is the “power of gleaning hope in times of despair.”⁹⁹ This is “*seeking and gathering the seeds or remnants of hope that can be found.*”¹⁰⁰ The second is the “power of being a people.”¹⁰¹ Mullino Moore suggests the following:

⁹⁷Ruth 1:16-17.

⁹⁸ Mullino Moore, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*, 153.

⁹⁹Ibid, 157.

¹⁰⁰Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹⁰¹Ibid, 158.

...schools are held together with a central mission and focus, and also by some form of homogeneity (common interests, culture, or specialization); intentional commitment of leaders, special attention to students by teachers over time; and encouragement of students to take responsibility and leadership for the sake of the larger community.¹⁰²

The third is the “power of shared mission and sense of belonging.”¹⁰³ Shared mission is defined as “the experience of living and working purposefully over time.”¹⁰⁴ Mullino Moore further comments, “These efforts anchor the community’s mission, binding people with shared vision, common work, and communal relationships for large purposes.”¹⁰⁵ The fourth and final power is the “power of birth, new birth, and nurture.”¹⁰⁶ Mullino Moore suggests that “communities that deepen over time are ones in which people are born again and again... Acknowledging these multiple forms of nurture leads to a sense of power to endure, create, and sustain community.”¹⁰⁷

Mullino Moore offers six education practices through which “teaching through nurture”¹⁰⁸ can happen. The first is to “offer care.”¹⁰⁹ In doing this teachers are “*to nourish people’s bodies, minds and spirits in the learning community and larger world.*”¹¹⁰ The Jesuits would call this *cura personalis*. Mullino Moore continues, “*The*

¹⁰²Ibid, 159.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid, 159 and 160.

¹⁰⁸Ibid, 169.

¹⁰⁹Ibid, 170.

¹¹⁰Ibid (emphasis in the original).

*practice of care can bind a community, even when people are diverse in belief and values, and even when their acts of care arise from different motivations.*¹¹¹

The second practice is to “seek and reflect on life wherever it is found.”¹¹²

Mullino Moore says, “People can usually decry evil with ease; to perceive life in the midst of evil is more difficult.”¹¹³ Therefore, she suggests four specific steps to take in this practice:

- *Seeking for God within tragedy;*
- *Expecting and opening to God’s revelations, even in times of danger and death;*
- *Revisiting revelatory experiences and probing them for deeper meanings;*
- *Engaging in regular spiritual practices (eucharist, silence, prayer), expecting them to hone one’s alertness to God and the ways of God.*¹¹⁴

The third practice is to “participate in forces of good.”¹¹⁵ Mullino Moore conveys the importance of doing this within a particular context. She suggests, “In ambiguous contexts, people might be seeking the forces of most good or least evil.”¹¹⁶ Such participation should lead to protest, building and equipping, and practicing kindness and justice.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹Ibid, 171 (emphasis in the original).

¹¹²Ibid, 174.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Ibid, 175 (emphasis in the original).

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Ibid, 176 and 177.

The fourth practice is to “engage in story and ritual.”¹¹⁸ This means “*to nurture life through narrative and performative relationships.*”¹¹⁹ Mullino Moore explains, “*Stories are narrative embodiments of experience, involving characters, movement, and interactions over time.*”¹²⁰ She goes on, “*Ritual, on the other hand, is the community’s reenactment of central events or meanings in their encounter with God and the world.*”¹²¹ This practice can clearly be enacted through the elements and practices of liturgy.

The fifth practice is to “mentor”¹²² This is done in five steps. The first of which is to “walk with others.”¹²³ This is defined as “*spending time, taking an interest in another’s life, seeking ways to enhance the quality of the other’s life, responding to the other’s needs and yearnings, and praying and caring for the other* all without the promise of reward.”¹²⁴ The second is to “listen and explain.”¹²⁵ According to Mullino Moore, “*a mentor walks into difficult situations and seeks ways to nurture people into growth.*”¹²⁶ The third is “modeling.”¹²⁷ This is “*calling other people to faithful acts... mentors guide and inspire others by living well in adversity.*”¹²⁸ The fourth is to

¹¹⁸Ibid, 178.

¹¹⁹Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹²⁰Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹²¹Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹²²Ibid, 182.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹²⁵Ibid, 183.

¹²⁶Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Ibid (emphasis in the original).

“share opportunities and responsibilities.”¹²⁹ Mullino Moore explains, “Mentoring involves people once again in acts of justice and kindness, but this time the focus is on the mentor or mentoring community, called to let go of control and allows other seize opportunities and assume responsibilities.”¹³⁰ The fifth is to “guide.”¹³¹ This comes down to “*guiding people to discern and use their gifts.*”¹³² The sixth and final practice is to “play.”¹³³ Mullino Moore states, “It is part of walking humbly with God, for play is the avenue by which people explore faith and experiment with spiritual practices, reinforcing their sense of God’s ongoing creation, especially God’s *creation of space for new birth.*”¹³⁴

Mullino Moore encourages teachers to practice the hermeneutic of life – “seek seeds of life in every situation and to nourish those seeds with further reflection and interpretation.”¹³⁵ God persistently gives life. The Church has always taught through nurturing and it continues to do so through its schools. We see in instances of gathering in fellowship in classes, study groups, clubs, and teams. It is seen in the breaking of bread in liturgies and at lunch, in prayer, daily meditations, class prayers, and prayer services. It is also seen in the sharing of worldly goods such as in blood drives, community service, food drives, and mission trips. Teachers particularly nourish life by

¹²⁹Ibid, 184.

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹³⁵Ibid, 168

...seeking God in tragedy, expecting an opening to God's revelations, even in times of danger and death, revisiting revelatory experience and probing them for deeper meanings, and engaging in regular spiritual practices (Eucharist, silence, prayer), expecting them to hone one's alertness to God and the ways of God.¹³⁶

“Reconstructing Community and Repairing the World”

The final act of teaching sacramentally is the call to “Reconstruct Community and Repair the World.” Teachers should help students in “discerning Holy nudges, analyzing sacred texts and life event, and reconstructing their community life, theology, and action in light of emerging visions and insights.”¹³⁷

There are five powers associated with reconstructing community and repairing the world. The first is the “power of communal discernment.”¹³⁸ This is defined as “*searching together for the movements and call of God.*”¹³⁹ The second is the “power of visioning alternatives.”¹⁴⁰ Mullino Moore comments that “the power of envisioning alternatives is not a magic that transforms everything at once; it often requires many steps, and slowly spreads across communities and generations.”¹⁴¹ The third power is the “power of becoming deeply involved with others.”¹⁴² This is “*engaging with others in the*

¹³⁶Ibid, 175.

¹³⁷Ibid, 204.

¹³⁸Ibid, 193.

¹³⁹Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Ibid, 194.

¹⁴²Ibid.

fullness of their lives,”¹⁴³ which would “challenge modern individualism...[and] the notion of separating religion and politics.”¹⁴⁴ Next is the “power of breaking the rules.”¹⁴⁵ This is defined as “subverting the normal conventions of behavior in their communities.”¹⁴⁶ Mullino Moore contends,

Given the conservative nature of institutions, and particularly of religious institutions, the practice of breaking rules is one of the most revolutionary that I have identified, pointing once again to the disruptive potential of sacramental living.¹⁴⁷

The final power is the “power of taking risks.”¹⁴⁸ This is defined as “engaging in practices that may have difficult consequences for oneself or others.”¹⁴⁹

Mullino Moore sets out seven educational practices to bring “reconstructing community and repairing the world” into the classroom. The first of these practices is to “commune.”¹⁵⁰ This is defined as “*to build covenantal relationships in which people commune with God and the gathered community for the sake of those who gather and the larger world.*”¹⁵¹ The second is to “cry and listen to the cry of others.”¹⁵² This means “to

¹⁴³Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Ibid, 195.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Ibid, 207.

¹⁵¹Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹⁵²Ibid, 208.

mourn the destruction and brokenness of the world.”¹⁵³ The third is to “confess.”¹⁵⁴ This means “*to speak with God, oneself, and others about failings in oneself and one’s communities.*”¹⁵⁵

The fourth is to “celebrate.”¹⁵⁶ This is “the act of *giving thanks to the God of hope*, who offers ever-new possibilities of transformation for the sake of creation’s flourishing.”¹⁵⁷ The fifth practice is to “convert.”¹⁵⁸ This means “*to turn together into a new way of life*. This is an obvious practice for reconstruction and repair, as it focuses on envisioning alternate futures and actively moving toward them.”¹⁵⁹ The sixth practice is to “construct.”¹⁶⁰ This is “the slow, painstaking work of constructing a new world from the ashes of the former one.”¹⁶¹ According to Mullino Moore this requires practicing risk-taking, self-giving, and hospitality.¹⁶² The seventh and final practice is to “commission.”¹⁶³ This means “*sending people out together to do God’s will in the church and world.*”¹⁶⁴

¹⁵³Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹⁵⁴Ibid, 209.

¹⁵⁵Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹⁵⁶Ibid, 210.

¹⁵⁷Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

¹⁵⁹Ibid, 210 – 211 (emphasis in the original).

¹⁶⁰Ibid, 213.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

¹⁶²Ibid, 214.

¹⁶³Ibid, 215.

¹⁶⁴Ibid (emphasis in the original).

Mullino Moore draws the following conclusion about sacramental teaching:

This perspective pushes the edges of contemporary theory in religious education and liturgical theology. It also critiques common church practices of drawing sharp distinctions between teaching and worship, and between sacraments and the rest of ministry... Thus, we can affirm that *faithful living is a response to God's sacramental presence in all times and places and God's calling for people to mediate divine grace through the ordinary stuff of creation for the sanctification of human life and the well-being of all creation.*¹⁶⁵

WORLD-AFFIRMING EDUCATION AND TEACHING SACRAMENTALLY

World-affirming education is a way in which teachers can execute a curriculum through a sacramental worldview. Teachers can intentionally use the material they present to reveal an aspect of God's creation to their students. In doing so the entire spectrum of the educational experience of the students creates a tapestry of creation that points to its Creator.

When teaching is considered a sacramental act, the teacher patterns the way they interact with their students in such a way that not only is the material they cover revelatory but the relationship with which they engage their students is as well. Sacramental teaching requires a specific philosophy of how a teacher approaches and views a student and how they approach their work in general. If teaching is to be considered a considered a sacramental act, then it must be considered a sacred act. Those who perform sacred acts are ministers; therefore the art of teaching is ministerial in nature. "Like worship, preaching, administration, pastoral care, and social action, it is *a*

¹⁶⁵Ibid, 221 (emphasis in the original).

holy practice in response to the Holy One who gifts the world with grace and power beyond imagination."¹⁶⁶

The Jesuits define world-affirming as recognizing the "radical goodness of the world."¹⁶⁷ Mullino Moore calls teachers to find the "radical goodness" in their students and in the community in which they serve as educational ministers by calling them to "Expect the Unexpected." The Jesuits further define world-affirming education as an effort that "tries to create a sense of wonder and mystery in learning about God's creation." Mullino Moore speaks of a "theology of wonder" that provides the perspective of expecting the unexpected. A theology of wonder produces the realization that "*God is transcendentally immanent and immanently transcendent.*"¹⁶⁸ Is God transcendent or is God immanent? While this has been a hotly debated question among theologians for centuries, nonetheless, its answer is central world-affirming education. If God created all things, then God transcends all things. Yet, from a sacramental perspective, if God is found in all things, then God must be present in all things. This recalls the words of Aquinas.

...in some way God is in every place; and this is to be everywhere. First, as He is in all things giving them being, power and operation; so He is in every place as giving it existence and locative power.... and God fills every place... indeed, by the very fact that He gives being to the things that fill every place, He Himself fills every place.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶Ibid (emphasis in the original).

¹⁶⁷Kolvenbach, *Go Forth and Teach*, 17.

¹⁶⁸Mullino Moore, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*, 50.

¹⁶⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia.8.2.

Furthermore, Jesuit education “is concerned with the total formation of each student as an individual personally loved by.”¹⁷⁰ This ties directly into the act of “Remember the Dismembered.” Nothing can ever change the fact that every student is loved by God. Even if a student feels they are not loved by the community, they are still loved by God. A student who has had academic or disciplinary issues may feel rejected by the community either out of injustice toward them or out of guilt for what they have done. A community in the service of God cannot reject that which God loves. It is part of world-affirming education to be affirming of every student.

One of the prayers associated with Jesuit spirituality is *The Examen*. Many Jesuit schools, including Belen Jesuit make it a point to pray *The Examen* every day as a community. It is always prayed out a sense of gratitude. We approach reflecting on our day with thanksgiving, which also happens to be an act of sacramental teaching. Starting from a point-of-view of gratitude promotes a certain positivity in prayer. Without it, our reflection could turn into a reckoning of failure of sin throughout the day. If that is all we see, we are seeing the “radical goodness” in our lives and in our world. Mullino Moore adds, “this is not a ‘positive thinking’ veneer, but a deep sense that goodness dwells under the rancor and devastation of daily life.”¹⁷¹

The objective of Jesuit world-affirming education is “to assists in the fullest possible development of all of the God-given talents of each individual person as a member of the human community.”¹⁷² Like Jesuit education, Mullino Moore emphasizes

¹⁷⁰Kolvenbach, *Go Forth and Teach*, 17.

¹⁷¹Mullino Moore, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*, 124.

¹⁷²Kolvenbach, *Go Forth and Teach*, 17-18.

the role of community in education. This is where the notion of “Nourishing Life” comes into play. What a teacher does in her/his individual class cannot be separated from what is done in the whole school. The impact of these actions, however, is not reserved solely to the school community. Mullino Moore contends that “our acts are important to personal well-being, to our people, and to the larger human community.”¹⁷³

Jesuit world-affirming education claims that “a more complete knowledge of creation can lead to a greater knowledge of God and a greater willingness to work with God in His ongoing creation.”¹⁷⁴ God’s creation is ongoing. It is not an act for which we read the beginning and end of in Genesis. Genesis only states “in the beginning,” it says nothing about the end. If creation is ongoing then there is “reconstructing” and “repairing” also going on which takes us to the final act of sacramental teaching. Working with God on His creation means that we participate in the reconstructing and repairing of creation through being involved in our own community. World-affirming education should take students beyond knowing about something to participating in something. This requires self-giving. This requires becoming “Men for Others.” World-affirming education puts into practice “a vision of sacramental living in which that kind of self-giving is advocated as a human calling.”¹⁷⁵

CONCLUSION

¹⁷³ Mullino Moore, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*, 153.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 17.

¹⁷⁵ Mullino Moore, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*, 187.

Teaching as a sacramental act as outlined by Mullino Moore is consistent with the Jesuit notion of world-affirming. However, the data collected in surveys and interviews demonstrates that world-affirming education is a term that most people at Belen Jesuit are not familiar with through lack of education in its meaning. Yet, if it is the first characteristic of Jesuit education, something needs to be done to change that situation. The next and final chapter will propose a new praxis by which world-affirming education not only becomes known at Belen Jesuit, but emphasized and enacted as something defining of a Jesuit school. The way in which it can be enacted is by approaching teaching as a sacramental act.

Chapter 5

TOWARD A NEW PRAXIS

Having reviewed the data gathered and the theological and ministerial theories explored, this chapter now proposes a new praxis aimed at enhancing the capacity of Belen Jesuit Preparatory School to offer the world-affirming education characteristic of Jesuit educational tradition. This will be set forth in three steps.

The first step toward enhancing a world-affirming education is a reemphasis on teaching as a ministry. The survey and interview data seem to indicate that the faculty of Belen Jesuit mostly do see their work as ministerial. The second step toward enhancing world-affirming education is adopting a sacramental view of the world. This is where the Jesuit mantra of “finding God in all things” comes to life in concrete decisions and actions. However, for world-affirming education to be at the heart of Belen Jesuit, the faculty must be equipped to point out possible ways in which God can be found in the subject areas within which they operate if the student made the choice to see something in a certain way. God is not going to be made present in the same way for every person, but inviting students to look for God within all the areas of academic life produces a healthy spiritual habit that can cause them to adopt a world-view that understands and accepts “the radical goodness of the world.”¹

To facilitate this, however, a third step is necessary: Belen Jesuit faculty must embrace teaching as a sacramental act. This suggests that God is mediated through the act of teaching itself, not just by the content that is taught. Mullino Moore writes, “Yet God’s incarnational presence is active at all times and places; thus, all creation is sacramental...

¹Kolvenbach, *Go Forth and Teach*, 17.

And teaching is sharing faith in a gathered learning community, but it also includes sharing faith in other times and places and in a multitude of forms.”² She continues, “Christian education thus includes the full life of the church – sharing and reflecting in classrooms, praying and planning with others, recreation, worship, and service in the community.”³

ENHANCING A WORLD-AFFIRMING EDUCATION

Teaching as Ministry

The first step in enhancing a world-affirming education at Belen Jesuit is to adopt the perspective that the act of teaching is a ministry. For Belen Jesuit to present a truly world-affirming education to its students, every teacher needs to join in the effort. This cannot be the charge of the theology department only. Every student needs to see that a world-affirming atmosphere exists in every class and with every teacher without exception. To establish world-affirming education, the teachers should see their work of educating, guiding, and walking with their students as ministry.

In his study entitled “The Sacramentality of Study,” David Brattson points out that, in the 2nd Century, St. Clement of Alexandria called for the act of teaching to be considered a ministry in the Church. Summarizing Clement, Brattson writes, “Thus, there must be an equal ministry for a Christian scholar, teacher, and writer who can provide

²Mullino Moore, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*, 9.

³Ibid, 13.

guidance and exhortation...”⁴ He claims that the teaching ministry can be found in Jesus, Himself.

Although Jesus himself received no formal theological education (John 7:15), He nevertheless taught, trained others, and inspired an endless number to practical good works. The Gospels reveal Him as possessing a thorough knowledge of Scripture, and an outstanding ability to analyze and apply it to raise the moral and material standard of others.⁵

Thomas O’Meara believes that it is impossible to define ministry in simple, concrete terms. Ministry is too fluid and too mobile to be limited by such a definition. Therefore he proposes six characteristics that would identify a certain activity as a ministry. He defines ministry thusly:

Ministry is: (1) doing something; (2) for the advent and presence of the kingdom of God; (3) in public; (4) on behalf of a Christian community; (5) as a gift received in faith, baptism, and ordination; and (6) as an activity with its own limits and identity existing within a diversity of ministerial actions.⁶

In his article, “Ignatian Spirituality, Collaboration, and Development: A Reflection from an Educational Perspective,” Michael Edwards speaks of the need of teachers to see that what they do in the classroom, they do “for Christ and his Kingdom.”⁷ This speaks to

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid, 10.

⁶Thomas O’Meara, O.P., *Theology of Ministry* (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1999), 141.

⁷Michael Edwards, “Ignatian Spirituality”, 8.

O'Meara's second characteristic of ministry which is that it is done "for the advent and presence of the kingdom of God."⁸ He concedes that there are some teachers "who cannot see any connection between their personal activity and the mission of the Jesuit work in which they are involved."⁹ And yet he continues, "we (teachers) are all collaborators, and in need of affirmation in what we bring of ourselves and our own personal human spirituality to make a valuable contribution to the whole community."¹⁰

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education has this to say about the important role that teachers play:

By their witness and their behavior teachers are of the first importance to impart a distinctive character to Catholic Schools. It is, therefore, indispensable to ensure their continuing formation through some sort of pastoral provision. This aim must animate them as witnesses of Christ in the classroom and tackle the problems of their particular apostolate, especially regarding a Christian vision of the world and of education.¹¹

In this statement the Congregation points out the particular importance of the witness that teachers provide and how their act of witnesses need to be fostered. The act of witnessing addressing O'Meara's third characteristic of ministry which is that is an act that is done "in public."¹² When the Congregation claims that the aim continuing formation of teachers is "to tackle the problems of their particular apostolate, especially regarding a Christian vision of the world and of education," it is saying that teaching is "an activity

⁸O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 141.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹*The Catholic School* (Rome: Sacred Congregation for Education, 1977), n. 78.

¹²O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 141.

with its own limits and identity existing within a diversity of ministerial actions,”¹³ which is O’Meara’s sixth characteristic of ministry.

The perspective of teaching as a ministry can begin to take shape with a particular understanding of education itself that is presented by St. Augustine. Ronnie Campbell suggests that “for Augustine, education was truth-centered, and therefore, God-directed... He (Augustine) understood that teaching is about helping the student become passionate for learning.”¹⁴ Campbell continues: “The classroom experience, then, should be one that leads both the student and teacher toward truth....The goal of Christian education, then, is not merely instruction – the giving of content – but for students to be moved by truth.”¹⁵ As for the act of teaching Campbell states, “He [Augustine] saw teaching as a spiritual exercise or discipline and that there was an ethical responsibility on behalf of the follower of Christ to train and serve others for the purpose of Christian formation.”¹⁶ The formation of good Christians is a service that is done “on behalf of a Christian community”¹⁷ which is O’Meara’s fourth characteristic of ministry.

Theodore Ludlow believed that a strong teaching ministry is exactly what the Church needed in his time. He said thusly:

The chief need of our Church at the present time is not more auditors, more money contributors or even more workers. We need more members with a consciousness of their privilege and duty as potential revealers of God’s truth to a

¹³O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 141.

¹⁴Ronnie Campbell, “Ever Learning, Ever Loving: Augustine on Teaching as Ministry,” *Eleutheria* 2 no. 2 (2013), 30.

¹⁵Ibid, 27 & 28.

¹⁶Ibid, 18.

¹⁷O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 141.

world that is in conflict because its problems are being faced by immature and undeveloped spiritual personalities.¹⁸

He speaks of the privilege and duty of revealing God. This echoes O'Meara's fifth characteristic of ministry, which is that it is "a gift received in faith."¹⁹

Developing a Sacramental Worldview

Kevin Irwin suggests that the retrieval of a sacramental worldview is essential for the survival of Catholic Christianity.²⁰ He observes, "The sacramental and the symbolic are here jettisoned for the immediate and the ephemeral. Ongoing conversion to the gospel is replaced by the quick fix and self-help problem 'solving.'"²¹

Developing a sacramental worldview would mean seeing everything we interact with and experience in world as "signs of the way the divine is manifested in the human, of the sacred in our secular world, of how all that is of God is incarnated among us."²²

Michael Himes believes that the Incarnation is paramount to a sacramental worldview.

I cannot overemphasize how important this is to the whole Catholic intellectual tradition because in it we maintain that, if one takes the incarnation seriously, God, the absolute Mystery, does not act human or pretend to be human or take on some aspects of humanity: rather, we maintain that the absolute Mystery is human.²³

¹⁸Theodore Ludlow, "The Need of a Teaching Ministry," *Anglican Theological Review* 20 no. 4 (October 1938), 250.

¹⁹O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 141.

²⁰Irwin, "A Sacramental World," 197.

²¹*Ibid.*, 198.

²²*Ibid.*

²³Himes, "Living Conversation," 9.

Within the teaching ministry, therefore, the teacher who has adopted a sacramental worldview would demonstrate to their students how God is incarnate in the subject matter they present. Irwin, using a definition of sacramentality found in *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism* asserts that:

One way of expressing this is to say that all reality “is potentially or in fact the bearer of God’s presence and the instrument of God’s saving activity... Together with the principles of mediation (God works through second agents to achieve divine ends) and communion (the end of all of God’s activity is the union of humanity), the principle of sacramentality constitutes one of the central theological characteristics of Catholicism.”²⁴

Irwin describes a sacramental worldview as a “world in which God has revealed and continues to reveal God’s very self through the material of human existence, set within the world as itself regarded as sacramental.”²⁵

Bernard Cooke suggests that the teaching ministry of the Church today would do well by modelling itself after the themes of Jesus’ teaching ministry. He identifies them thusly:

1) Foremost and constantly, Jesus talked about God, whom he knew in intimacy as his Abba. 2) He talked about “the kingdom of God,” the way his Abba has guided and was still guiding the history of Israel and of all humankind. 3) He talked about the purpose of life and the destiny of people and he did this with hope in the ultimate goodness and meaning of human existence. 4) He talked about a new set of values that constituted a paradoxical God-given wisdom. 5) He talked about the goodness of creation, the fundamental goodness of people, particularly the goodness of the marginalized men and women with whom he so frequently

²⁴Irwin, “A Sacramental World,” 202.

²⁵Ibid, 202-203.

and so easily associated, whom he loved and about whom he was so deeply concerned.²⁶

Teaching as a Sacramental Act

It seems that whenever something new or different is proposed for the teaching ministry, the way in which it is carried out is through professional development. I will outline specific steps that the professional development should take in the next section.

I propose that, for Belen Jesuit to reach the next level in providing world-affirming education for its students, it should provide an atmosphere conducive to its teachers seeing their teaching as a sacramental act as proposed by Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore. By doing so, “finding God all in all things” is no longer just a catchphrase, but a way of life. By seeing their work with their students as ministry, adopting a sacramental worldview, and seeing teaching as a sacramental act, each teacher will be able to articulate how God is to be found in the material they present to their students.

I propose that Belen Jesuit use the nine-step planning process described by Mullino Moore to make teaching as a sacramental act a reality and therefore bring world-affirming education to the forefront of the school’s mission. Mullino Moore asserts that not all of these steps may be necessary and some could even be combined to meet the needs of this particular community.

²⁶Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, 172.

TEACHING AS A SACRAMENTAL ACT IN NINE STEPS

Preparation Materials

Below are the resources I suggest the administration and faculty become familiar with for each of the three proposed steps for enhancing the world-affirming education at Belen Jesuit.

For Teaching as Ministry:

- Bonino, Jose Miguez. “The Teaching Ministry in Historical Perspective.” *Religious Education*. 58 no. 1 (Jan – Feb 1963), 12 – 20.
- Campbell, Ronnie. “Ever Learning, Ever Loving: Augustine on Teaching As Ministry.” *Eleutheria* 2 no. 2 (2013), 18-32.
- Edwards, Michael. “Ignatian Spirituality, Collaboration and Development: A Reflection from an Educational Perspective.” *The Way*. 49 no. 3 (July 2010), 8 – 22.
- Fleischer, Barbara. “The Ignatian Vision for High Education: Practical Theology.” *Religious Education*. 88 no. 2 (Spring 1993), 255 – 272.
- Groome, Thomas H. *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.
- O’Meara, Thomas F. *Theology of Ministry*. New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1999.

For Developing a Sacramental Worldview:

- Cooke, Bernard. *Sacraments and Sacramentality*. New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2011.
- Himes, Michael, “Finding God in All Things: A Sacramental Worldview and its Effects.” in *As Leaven in the World* edited by Thomas Landy, pp.91–103. New York: Sheed and Ward, 2001.
- Himes, Michael. “Living Conversation.” *Conversations on Higher Jesuit Education* (Fall 1995): 21-27.
- Groome, Thomas. “What Makes Us Catholic: The Sacramental Principle.” *C21 Resources* 21 (Spring 2012): 4-5.
- Groome, Thomas. *What Makes Us Catholic: Eight Gifts for Life*. New York: Harper Collins, 2003.

For *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*:

- Downs, Perry. "Education as Sacrament." *CEJ* 8 no. 1 (2011), 101 – 113.
- Mullino Moore, Mary Elizabeth. *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004.

Format

A committee should be selected involving the different levels of hierarchy as well as those representing different interests and functions within the school community. I propose that this would include the President, Principal, Assistant Principals, Director of Campus Ministry, Director of Counseling, Department Chairpersons, and the Director of Alumni Relations.

The purpose of the committee would be to become well-informed about the subject material involved so that they could provide leadership to those faculty, staff, students, and alumni within their purview. This committee would begin its endeavor in the first semester of the school year and work strictly within itself. The members of the committee will need this time to familiar themselves with the concepts involved in enhancing world-affirming education that I have laid out here.

Once the committee has mastered the concepts involved, it will be time to present the program to the larger community. I propose that this should be done by the President as the face of the institution for all stakeholders. This can be through a series of assemblies for faculty and staff, students, parents, and alumni.

Several such assemblies would provide faculty the opportunity to become familiar with the concept of seeing teaching as a ministry. This would include an understanding of ministry itself and seeing that their work with their students conforms to that understanding. At first this would be done faculty wide, and then the department chairperson

(as members of the initial committee) can customize the concept of seeing teaching as ministry to their individual departments. This can be facilitated through department meetings.

In the midst of this formation, I propose a series of retreats for each of the groups of stakeholders in order to develop a sacramental worldview. As a Jesuit school, Belen Jesuit could make use of the *Spiritual Exercises* as a format for these retreats. I believe this would work well since developing a sacramental worldview is essentially “finding God in all things.” The format and content can be adjusted according to the group of stakeholders and, in the case of the students, according to grade-level. Belen Jesuit already offers the *Spiritual Exercises* as a retreat for Seniors, but it is a three-day retreat. So this retreat would have to be adapted for the younger grades.

The final part of the formation would be for the administrators and faculty in particular. I propose a lecture series where different theologians, educators, and administrators who have bought into the idea of teaching as a sacramental act can come and give presentations about what effect this perspective has had on their own personal vocation of teaching as well as their school communities. From there, I propose that lesson plans, professional learning communities, and department meetings reflect how we are incorporating this perspective into our ministries. Within these professional learning communities and department meetings, the following nine steps proposed by Mullino Moore in her book would take place.

Steps in the Process

(1) Reflecting on the Community

The first step is reflecting on the current situation of the community. Mullino Moore suggests that this needs to be done by the entire community and not by a select few serving on a committee. The reflection may be led by an appointed leader or committee, but everyone should be involved. There are two ingredients that are indispensable for this step: “listening to others” and “genuine opening to fresh insight.”²⁷

(2) Finding Signs of God’s Blessings or Surprises in the Community

In this step, Mullino Moore proposes the question, “Where do you see signs of God’s blessings or surprises in the community?”²⁸ This is akin to one of reflective questions used in the Examen. Mullino Moore asks us to “*reflect on the signs of God’s movement in your community and its larger context*. This is a time to focus on blessings, discerning what God is already doing and your community might participate in these holy movements.”²⁹

(3) Destruction, Danger or Threats

Once we have identified what is going well, the next logical step is seeing where we can improve. Mullino Moore’s third step is reflecting on the question “What destruction, danger or threats do you see in the present situation, or on the horizon?”³⁰ She suggests,

²⁷Ibid, 222.

²⁸Ibid, 223.

²⁹Ibid (emphasis in the original).

³⁰Ibid.

The purpose of this step is...to dwell in pain as part of a larger movement of God's Spirit... Yet communities need to be honest about destruction, danger, and threats – both from inside and outside the community – and then move toward new moments of hope beyond pain.³¹

(4) Imagination for the Future

The fourth step calls for the community to look toward the future and not hold back. “What wild imagination do you have for your community’s future?”³² Mullino Moore warns that this should not be a planning session, but rather should consider what the community *could* be and what it *could* do. “This is a time when people might read stories of other churches and communities to stir imagination, when they might remind themselves constantly to think beyond what they have already known in the past.”³³

(5) Gifts and Strengths to Build Upon

The fifth step is an evaluation of the gifts and strengths of the community by asking – “Upon what gifts or strengths could you build?”³⁴ Such reflection will lead us to “*identify gifts in the community and its context that might contribute to the future.*”³⁵

Mullino Moore elaborates thus:

In this movement of the planning process, a time of meditation and thanksgiving can be helpful... Pause for a time of silence in which people meditate on the gifts and strengths of the community. IN this way, the practice of

³¹Ibid, 224.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid. (emphasis in the original)

giving thanks can permeate the inner life of the planning community, as well as the conversation.³⁶

(6) Yearnings and Hopes

Steps six asks, “What yearnings and hopes to you have for your congregation or community? Of the ideas identified earlier, which seem most important for the community to consider?”³⁷ Mullino Moore explains, “To focus on yearnings and hopes is to identify seeds of life that can later be selected and nourishing into fullness.”³⁸ This intertwines with step seven in envisioning future actions.

(7) Priorities for the Future

This step asks, “What priorities will we set for the future of this community – for the immediate or long-range future?”³⁹ Mullino Moore suggests three acts of prioritizing should be taken in order for the community to discover where and how it is “nourishing life.”

The first is to “prioritize blessings and surprises (identified in step 2).”⁴⁰ To do this the community must pose the following question: “*Which of God’s blessings and surprises will most likely strengthen the future ministry of this community?*”⁴¹

³⁶Ibid, 225 (emphasis in the original).

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid, 226.

⁴¹Ibid (emphasis in the original)

The second act of prioritizing is to “prioritize destruction, danger, and threats (from step 3).”⁴² This question follows: “*What cries are most urgent, demanding immediate and long-term attention?*”⁴³

The third act of prioritizing is to “prioritize the community’s wild imagination (from step 4).”⁴⁴ This question follows: “*Which of our imaginings do we discern to be most compelling, God-ordained, and possible for our future?*”⁴⁵

(8) Who, What, and How?

The eighth step in the process is where the community begins to put a plan into focus by determining the “What, how, and who?”⁴⁶ Mullino Moore suggests the following questions be reflected on and acted on in this step:

- How specifically will we draw upon the gifts of our community to move in these new directions?
- In light of our yearnings and hopes, which plan of action will we adopt in order to follow God’s call in this time and place?
- What will be our specific goals?
- How will we design the community’s common work – its prayer, study, direct action, fellowship, and reflection?
- Who will take responsibility for developing and implementing the different aspects of our design?

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid (emphasis in the original).

⁴⁶Ibid, 226.

- What commitments will people make for next steps?⁴⁷

(9) Reflecting and Beginning Again

The ninth step does not involve a specific question, but reflecting on how the community answered the previous eight questions. The ninth step takes place once the plan is enacted and enough time has passed to allow for further reflection. Mullino Moore poses three questions that can be asked at this stage:

- *How has the design (purposes, structures, processes, and processes, and events) shaped our community? What has been especially meaningful, powerful, and transformative?*
- *How has the design affected others' lives?* This could include people's personal lives; their families; the larger congregation or denomination; the city, town, or neighborhood; or other parts of the global village.
- *What in this design does the community need to continue into the future, and what needs to be changed?*⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

In addition to myself, my hope is that all my colleagues and supervisors will benefit from this investigation. As educators in a Catholic, Jesuit institution, we can better accomplish the mission of the school if we understand our teaching as a sacramental act that is world-affirming. My research is an attempt to help us better understand that the knowledge of the world we share with our students also gives our students knowledge of God. I have often said to my students that if they want to understand Picasso, they should look at his art. If they want to understand Beethoven, they should listen to his music. If they want to understand God, they should look at His work, which is all of creation. From the Jesuit

⁴⁷Ibid, 226-227.

⁴⁸Ibid, 227 (emphasis in the original).

perspective, knowledge of creation resides in the various subjects that students study and that ultimately lead back to the Creator. As a result, each faculty member at Belen Jesuit holds a piece of God's creation to reveal to our students. This research is an attempt to help administration and faculty to understand and appreciate that.

I agree with Perry Downs' assertion that ministry of any kind needs a theological foundation. Since teaching is a ministerial act, it too needs a theological foundation. I have presented the notion of sacramentality as that foundation. From this foundation, it is possible for all teachers in all subjects to help their students find God in all things. In doing so, teaching becomes a sacramental act. It mediates God to the students. God can become present through the revelation of the knowledge and data of this world. Teaching as a sacramental act will bridge the gap between preserving the religious dimension that is a characteristic of Jesuit education and forcing religious beliefs on our students. Sacramental teaching is an invitation to see God in all things that flows from an atmosphere of sacramentality. It is our hope that our students will come to find God in what they study, and more importantly, to strengthen their personal bond with Him by affirming the goodness of creation.

Appendix 1

Survey for the Administrators and Faculty of Belen Jesuit Preparatory School

Please respond to the following statements as accurately and honestly as you can. Please do not write your name or any other information that would reveal your identity. Be assured that the results for this survey are being used for research purposes only and individual responses will not be used by Belen Jesuit Preparatory School in any way.

Glossary of Terms

- **World-Affirming** – Jesuit education affirms the radical goodness of the world, tries to create a sense of wonder and mystery in learning about God’s creation, probes the meaning of human life and is concerned with the total formation of each student as an individual personally loved by God.
- **Religious Center** - The pedagogy of Jesuit education includes a religious (namely, Catholic, Christian and Jesuit) dimension that permeates the entire educational experience of a student including the classroom, stage, and playing field.
- **Ministerial** – Teaching is a vocation that provides service to God, our students, and their parents.
- **Mission Statement of Belen Jesuit Preparatory School** – “Following the Ignatian tradition of excellence, the mission of Belen Jesuit Preparatory School as a Catholic, Jesuit school is to guide and support our students in their process of becoming men who are proficient in both English and Spanish, open to growth, intellectually competent, religious, loving, and committed to doing justice, so they can work as leaders for the defense of faith and the promotion of justice in a multicultural society.”
- **Sacramental** – mediating God using the realities of the world.

- 1) The teaching of all subjects at Belen Jesuit has the potential to be **world-affirming**.
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 2) It is possible for every teacher to approach his/her teaching as **world-affirming**.
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 3) All classes taught at a Catholic, Jesuit school are expected to have a **religious center** that permeates the entire educational experience of the student.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 4) My act of teaching is **ministerial** in nature.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 5) The teaching of all subjects is **ministerial** in nature.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 6) All teachers in all subjects at Belen Jesuit teach in a manner that is **world-affirming** in nature.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 7) Belen Jesuit Preparatory School can and must do more to emphasize the importance of **world-affirming** education based on Jesuit values or on the Principles of Jesuit Education.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 8) Belen Jesuit Preparatory School can and must do more to emphasize and conduct teaching as a **sacramental** act that mediates God to the world.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 9) Emphasizing education as world-affirming enables Belen Jesuit Preparatory School to live its **mission statement** more effectively.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 10) Promoting teaching as a **sacramental** act that mediates God to the world will enable Belen Jesuit Preparatory School to live its **mission statement** more effectively.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

Appendix 2

Survey for the Recent Alumni of Belen Jesuit Preparatory School

Please respond to the following statements as accurately and honestly as you can. Please do not write your name or any other information that would reveal your identity. Please refrain from mentioning any administrators, faculty members, counselors, or any employees of Belen Jesuit Preparatory School by name in your comments. Be assured that the results for this survey are being used for research purposes only and individual responses will not be used by Belen Jesuit Preparatory School in any way.

Glossary of Terms

- **World-Affirming** – Jesuit education affirms the radical goodness of the world, tries to create a sense of wonder and mystery in learning about God’s creation, probes the meaning of human life and is concerned with the total formation of each student as an individual personally loved by God.
- **Religious Center** - The pedagogy of Jesuit education includes a religious (namely, Catholic, Christian and Jesuit) dimension that permeates the entire educational experience of a student including the classroom, stage, and playing field.
- **Ministerial** – Teaching is a vocation that provides service to God, our students, and their parents.
- **Mission Statement of Belen Jesuit Preparatory School** – “Following the Ignatian tradition of excellence, the mission of Belen Jesuit Preparatory School as a Catholic, Jesuit school is to guide and support our students in their process of becoming men who are proficient in both English and Spanish, open to growth, intellectually competent, religious, loving, and committed to doing justice, so they can work as leaders for the defense of faith and the promotion of justice in a multicultural society.”
- **Sacramental** – mediating God using the realities of the world.

- 1) The overall education I received at Belen Jesuit Preparatory School was **world-affirming**.
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 2) Most of the teachers who taught me at Belen Jesuit provided a world-affirming education.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 3) Most of the classes I took at Belen Jesuit had a **religious center** that permeated my educational experience while I was a student there.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 4) The teaching I received at Belen Jesuit was **ministerial** in nature.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 5) Most of the teachers who instructed me at Belen Jesuit saw their teaching as a **ministry**.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 6) Teachers in all subjects taught their subjects in a manner that is **world-affirming** in nature.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 7) Belen Jesuit could have done more as an institution to emphasize the importance of **world-affirming** education based on Jesuit values or the Principles of Jesuit Education.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 8) Most of the teachers who instructed me at Belen Jesuit conducted their teaching as a **sacramental** act that mediates God to the world.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 9) When Belen Jesuit emphasized the world-affirming nature of education, it was better equipped to live its **mission statement**.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

- 10) When the teachers at Belen Jesuit conduct their ministry of teaching as a **sacramental** act that mediates God to the world, Belen Jesuit is better equipped to live its **mission statement**.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

Appendix 3

Interview Questions for Select Administrators and Faculty of Belen Jesuit Preparatory School

The interviewer will assure the interviewee that their statements will not be disclosed to anyone and that all references made to their statements in this thesis-project will be kept completely confidential.

Glossary of Terms

- **World-Affirming** – Jesuit education affirms the radical goodness of the world, tries to create a sense of wonder and mystery in learning about God’s creation, probes the meaning of human life and is concerned with the total formation of each student as an individual personally loved by God.
- **Ministerial** – Teaching is a vocation that provides service to God, our students, and their parents.

1. To what extent do you believe all education should be **world-affirming as conceived in the values and principles of Jesuit education**?
2. To what extent do you believe the teachers at Belen Jesuit know what **world-affirming** education is and do their best to provide it? Give examples.
3. To what extent was **world-affirming** education was communicated to you in your formative years as a teacher/administrator at Belen Jesuit? Give examples
4. To what extent does Belen Jesuit assist its teachers in providing a **world-affirming** education to its students? Give examples.
5. Can you describe the support you have received from Belen Jesuit regarding providing a **world-affirming** education to the students and/or faculty within your purview? Give examples.
6. Give examples of how you have made the understanding of **world-affirming** education relevant to the subject areas/responsibilities of the students and/or faculty within your purview.
7. To what extent is the educational experience of the current students at Belen Jesuit truly **world-affirming**? Give examples.
8. To what extent do you believe that faculty and administrators at Belen Jesuit see their teaching as **ministerial** in nature?
9. To what extent do you believe the administration of Belen Jesuit encourages its teachers to see their work as **ministerial** in nature?
10. What specifically does Belen Jesuit do to encourage its teachers to see their work as **ministerial** in nature?

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