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1/10/2015

Conference to highlight educational innovations, provide guidance to students

A special conference planned for February will offer sessions both for Catholic educators and students, revolving around urban education reform and its intersection with art and faith.

The program, "Knowledge, Beauty, and Faith: Exploring the Urban Intersections of Education, Art, and Religion," is being organized by the Aquinas Institute in Princeton University, and will take place on the university campus on Saturday, Feb. 28.

The conference will focus in large part on the educational innovations that have brought about continued growth in St. Benedict's Preparatory School, Newark, under the direction of Father Edwin Leahy. The school's philosophy, "Anything that hurts my brother, hurts me," has become a central part of the school's mission, and the institution has come to be seen as a model for urban educational reform.

In 2013, filmmakers Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno released *The Rule*, a documentary film that captures the experience in St. Benedict's.

Both Father Leahy and the filmmakers will join guests for the conference, which aims to analyze the successes of St. Benedict's Prep and explore how similar results can be replicated in other institutions.

In addition to a range of workshops and sessions for administrators and educators, the program will feature a special corollary for Catholic high school juniors and seniors, "College Success & Survival: Getting in was the easy part."

Organizers hope that the conference will expose the greater Princeton community to the educational innovations taking place in Newark, particularly in St. Benedict's Prep, and to spark a conversation about faith, education and urban challenges.

The program will begin at 1 p.m. with screening of *The Rule*, which will run through 2:30 p.m. Following the film, the conference will feature a Q&A session with Marylou Bongiorno and Father Leahy.

Sessions will continue into the afternoon, with panels on urban education and school reform, representing social issues with art, and the connections between faith and education.

At 6 p.m., closing remarks will precede a Mass celebrated by Father Bryan Page, director and chaplain of Princeton University's Aquinas Institute and concelebrated by Father Leahy and any other priests in attendance. Invited dignitaries will be welcomed to a special dinner in the Prospect House following Mass at 7 p.m.

The conference will also feature offerings specifically geared towards students.

Following the screening of *The Rule*, students will be invited to take a tour of the campus before a 3:15 p.m. session, "College Success," which will focus on how to obtain a meaningful education and find success in college, all while thriving both intellectually and holistically. The session will be led by Nic Voge, associate director of The McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning at Princeton University, as well as Matt Frawlet, director of student life for Mathey College.

Students will also be offered a snack break with an opportunity to meet with current Catholic students on the Princeton campus, followed by a session led by Father Page, "Be Still," which will center on the importance and benefits of practicing the Catholic faith throughout one's college career. After Father Page's session, Pulin Sanghvi, executive director of Career Services, will lead a workshop, "Finding Direction," geared towards helping students to engage in self-reflection and ponder long-term decisions and goals.

The students will then join their faculty and administrative counterparts for Mass, followed by a special dinner for students.

The Aquinas Institute is asking for a \$20 registration fee per student to cover the cost of food and materials, and registration is limited to 100 students. Faculty and administrative attendance at the conference is free of charge.

To register, contact Danna Hargett at dlynnh@alum.bu.edu or 609-649-9730 with the names and number of students, faculty and administrators interested in attending. Those with questions or who want to learn more can also contact Hargett for more information.

Pope Francis

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