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Session 13: Understanding the Catholic Tradition

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Session 13: Understanding the Catholic Tradition

Materials Needed

1. Supplies for the brainstorm activity - could be post-it notes or scrap paper. As noted below, you may want to compile on newsprint or simply use the chalk/whiteboard in the room
2. Links to two videos - IT set to show them
3. [Catholic ID statement worksheet](#) - included in this plan
4. Students should be bringing something to write with

Top Three Areas

1. Students will understand that the Catholic tradition is one of the college's three core traditions
2. Students will understand the Catholic tradition is more diverse (e.g. membership, perspective, practice,) than they may have previously recognized.
3. Students will actively reflect on some of the values that flow out of the college's Catholic tradition and consider the ways in which they are called to act out of those values.

Person responsible for developing this session: Julie Massey

1. **Session Title: Understanding the Catholic Tradition**
2. **Session Date: Tuesday, October 3, 2017**
3. **Plenary or Small Group? Small Group**
4. **Learning Outcomes**
 - a. Demonstrate understanding of the history, mission and traditions of St. Norbert, St. Norbert College and the Norbertines.
5. **Other Goals**, if applicable (these are goals not directly connected to student learning – e.g. forming group cohesion or identifying which students may be struggling to transition.)
 - a. Bring to the surface conceptions/misconceptions about Catholicism and help students learn more about this core tradition of SNC.

2 p.m. Check in option

- [This option was devised when the lesson plan was different and we anticipated being more pressed for time. So it was thought of as a quick way to check in. It's was always an option; now it's *really* an option, so open your time as you see best!]
- Student mentor leads this, with staff helping to observe responses
- 3 fingers - one finger means blech; two fingers means fine; three fingers means great
 - How was your weekend?
 - How are classes going?
 - How are things with your roommate (for commuters, family)?
 - How are you feeling about Long Weekend?
 - How stressed are you right now?

2:05 p.m. Belief Pair Share

Intro by saying something along the lines of: *We're talking about the Catholic tradition today. As you know, that's one of the college's three core traditions - this institution is rooted in the Catholic, Norbertine, and liberal arts traditions. As an institution, we're clearly Catholic, but the members of the institution - students, faculty, staff - come from a variety of faith and spiritual perspectives.* [In our section, that's true of our leaders. If that's true of yours, you might mention that - don't need a deep dive into people's affiliations, but a casual mention might help students who are not Catholic feel connected. Alternately, your student mentor might reference having friends from various faith/spiritual backgrounds here at SNC.] *Take a moment to talk to the person next to you about your experiences of church, faith, spirituality. Share with each other your responses to one or more of the following* (you could write these on the board or a piece of newsprint, or have up on the screen if you wish):

- Growing up, what was your experience of religion or church?
- How does your family describe itself in terms of faith or spiritual perspective?
- What does the word religion mean to you? What does the term make you think of?

2:15 p.m. Brainstorm: What comes to mind when you hear the word *Catholic*?

Intro by saying something along the lines of: *Understanding that we in this room may be grounded in various Christian traditions, world religions, or spiritual practices, let's get a read on our current thoughts about the Catholic tradition.*

- Each student given a post-it note
 - Asked to jot a couple notes *for your thinking only*
 - In a few words put down what comes to mind when you hear the word Catholic?
- Poll the group - just numbers, not content - to get a general sense
 - How many put down a question or something about the Catholic tradition that's not clear to them?
 - How many noted a critique or something they may not agree with?
 - How many wrote about an aspect of the Catholic tradition they appreciate or value?
- Wrap up this segment by acknowledging we interact with this tradition from different perspectives. Perhaps ask the students - or speak to yourself - how they can explore any

questions they noted. [Possible answers - required TRS courses; take part in the parish's Generations of Faith program; attend various lectures - Miller, Killeen, Pilgrim - when they are on topics about which the students have questions; talk to a ministry staff person in Emmaus Center or Parish and/or Norbertines on campus.] In today's session, we hope to learn more about it as a core tradition of SNC as an institution.

2:25 p.m. Looking a little deeper

- *We've created a [video](#) that shows you images of places, groups and people who have a clear connection to the Catholic tradition.* [Leader info: most of the public figures in this video clearly affirm a current connection to the Catholic tradition. There are some cases in which the person affirms the importance of the tradition in their upbringing, with more ambiguity about whether or not they still consider themselves a practicing Catholic. Public figures who were raised Catholic but have made it clear they no longer consider themselves part of the tradition were not included. Also, the list of those in the video is at the end of this plan for your reference, just so you can answer a question if directly asked. It's not expected you would want/need to go through the list.]
- Quick reaction - Call on 5 people and ask, "What did you see?" or "What stood out to you?" There's no specific thing we're looking for, but reactions could include:
 - People with opposing political views
 - Images of prayer and of action/service
 - Causes that draw on ends of the political spectrum (LGBTQ, pro-life)
 - Fancy churches (yes, and there were deliberately some simpler worship spaces included)
 - People may note a particular celebrity. [You can simply reiterate that the public figures are intended to portray the breadth of those who consider the Catholic tradition formative in their life.]
- SNC's Catholic Identity
 - *So far we've considered our own impressions of the Catholic tradition and seen images of people and communities that are connected to it. But we started out talking about the Catholic tradition as one of the core traditions of SNC, and we want to bring things back to our experience here. Last year, our campus started working on drafting a Catholic identity statement - a succinct way to talk about what this core tradition means to us today. We're hoping that statement is finalized this year. For now, we have a draft version.*
 - Give each student a sheet with the elevator version and instructions (Alternately, you could project the statement and talk through what you want them to do with it. But there can be something useful about having your own copy in front of you and physically marking it up.)
 - Discuss people's responses - pair share, large group, small group, whip around - whatever's working in your section. The important thing is to have some conversation about it.
 - [What if...for the leaders. What if a student raises a point of disagreement with the Catholic ID statement and another student seems to shut them down because "this is a Catholic school?" You might note that the Catholic identity of

the *institution* is clear, and that within that identity we see a call to welcome people from diverse religious and spiritual perspectives. Individuals are expected and allowed to have points of agreement and disagreement with the Catholic tradition. What if a student raises a question about the Catholic tradition and you don't feel you know the answer? That's fine. If none of your three leaders believes they know a correct answer, simply note the question and let them know you'll get back to them with an answer. After class, you can reach out to Andrew, Jay, Julie, Sandy, etc - and we'll help you with the info. Please do be careful about allowing another student to answer. Along the way, we've sometimes had Catholic know-it-all students and, well, they don't!]

2:40 p.m. Being a student at a Catholic college

- Coming down to the wire, our students who helped [create a video](#) about SNC student experience related to the Catholic tradition still promise it will be ready. What follows are Plan A - video does exist and is saved in this Class Session folder. Plan B - what if no video?
- Plan A - Should you have time to review the video and feel comfortable putting it to use. (I thought I could insert a link - but it's beyond my tech-know. Wasn't sent to me that way by the students who did it. But you can access it in the same team drive as this outline.) We filmed for over 30 minutes and the students got us down to eight minutes.
 - The video is Julie interviewing three students Fr. Andrew lined up. Two are Catholic and one was raised unchurched. Live and learn - if we do this again, I would hope to include a student who is a practicing Christian of another tradition. Also, while Fr. Andrew - who knows these students rather well - knows the two Catholic students have pretty distinct ways of embracing the Roman Catholic tradition, I'm not sure that came through in the interviews.
 - Writing this before the video is complete, Fr. Andrew and I both perceived in the moment of the interview that the students said some really thoughtful things - they were articulate and spoke with depth. Should the video be ready and you decide to use it (in total or an excerpt,) we suggest setting it up like this, "A few weeks ago we had a chance to interview a few current students and ask them to think about SNC's Catholic identity and what it means for them. Let's take a look at what they say."
 - After the video (or excerpt) has concluded, debrief in the manner working best for your group - small group, pair share, large group, whip around...
 - What did you hear that was interesting to you?
 - What's been your experience so far of SNC's Catholic identity?
 - In what ways has it been similar to or different from the students in the video?
 - What do you think are some values found in the Catholic tradition that really shape the experience of SNC students across religious traditions or spiritual perspective?
- Plan B - The video was not done when you prepped and you don't feel you can incorporate it at this stage of the game.

- Skip to the Leftover time portion of this plan. And after that, let your group out early. In letting them out early you might note this is an exception, but we know we're at the time when every moment is precious and people are eager to finish their work and move into Long Weekend. Wish them well!

?? p.m. Leftover time?

This has not been an issue in some groups! But should you end with time to spare, you can certainly talk through your students' Long Weekend plans. And then you can get people jazzed about ***The Week of All Things Celebratory and Grand!*** As you should know, we have converging this year:

- [Heritage Week](#) - a week the college celebrates its founding. [No fallFEST this year, because of the [Norbertine Heritage Ball](#).]
 - Remember Fr. Jay's email asking us to make sure students know the Ball isn't only Ballroom, and they can come get their groove on. Student prices are cheap, and snacks and soda (caust these students are not legal,) included in the price!
- [Homecoming](#) - as you know, not always during Heritage Week, but fun when they coincide.
- [Inauguration](#) - could make the point that many students come and go from SNC without ever being part of an inauguration. Bonus for them!



Quick Look SNC Catholic Identity Statement: DRAFT

St. Norbert College is rooted in the Catholic tradition and seeks to exemplify the richness of that tradition today.

Our community does this by:

- Grounding our efforts in the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Fostering respect for the diverse faith perspectives and spiritual groundings of members of our campus community.
- Attending to the teaching of the church's magisterium while committing to the proper autonomy and integration of faith and reason, science and religion, contemplation and action.
- Protecting the dignity of all persons, and affirming the sacredness of God's creation.
- Coming together in worship and thanksgiving.
- Responding to the calls of service and reconciliation by attending to the needs of our local communities and the global family, and standing in solidarity with the human family and with the world.

What do *you* think? Considering the statement above:

- Circle/underline/star the words or phrases that make sense to you, that you connect with or agree with
- Note here any words/concepts/phrases from the statement that you have questions about
- Finish this phrase, "For the SNC community to fully live this out, we need to..."

In order listing of images from the video:

Selena Gomez - singer, actress
Steve Carrell - actor, comedian
Catholic Worker House
Steve Bannon - Breitbart
Joe Biden - politician
Black Catholic community in worship
Vatican guards
Megyn Kelly - media personality
Small rural church
Mike Pence - politician
Soup kitchen
Alec Baldwin - actor
Catholic Worker community in protest
Rosary
Stephen Colbert - media personality/comedian
Catholic Relief Services
Latin Mass
Lana Del Ray - singer/songwriter
Bradley Cooper-actor
Wall of a Catholic Worker in LA
Holy Name Cathedral, Chicago
Fergie - singer/songwriter
Bill & Melinda Gates - Microsoft/philanthropists
Newt Gingrich - politician
Saint Sabina Church, Chicago
President John F. Kennedy
Hispanic Catholic community in worship
Jim Gaffigan - comedian
Bill O'Reilly - media personality
Lady Gaga
LA Cathedral
Jimmy Kimmel - medial personality
Pope Francis
LGBTQ/Catholic Group
Pro-Life sign
Vanessa Hudgens - singer/actress
John Krasinski - actor
St. Peter's Basilica
El Salvadoran church where Romero was martyred
St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa)
Justice Sotomayor
Justice Thomas
Missionary work in Phillippines
Mark Wahlberg - actor

Brief Narrative describing the session (3 – 5 sentences offering the leaders a general sense of what will take place on this date.)

After a brief check-in process, students will be asked to pair share their childhood experiences of faith or church and what the term religion means to them. Then the group will brainstorm reactions to the term “Catholic.” We’ll share a very short video that shows some of the expansiveness of the tradition (through celebrities, types/locations of ministry, subgroups that are engaged in the tradition,) and then ask the students to engage the SNC articulation of the Catholic tradition. (It was hoped that SNC articulation would come through the “elevator version” of the Catholic identity statement, but for this year we may need to substitute in the bullets on the back of the bookmark.) At any rate, with either text, students will be invited to engage the text - what do they connect with, what do they have questions about, and what would it mean to live this out at SNC? For the end of the session, there will be a chance for groups to log on to a live panel that will receive and respond to questions in real time. Leaders will facilitate their groups brainstorming a question or two for this “ask the experts” component.