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From the Editor: Physicality: Bodies, Buildings, Beauty

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Physicality: Bodies, Buildings, Beauty

“And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”

The Prologue to the Gospel of John sums up what we have tried to achieve in this varied collection of essays, pictures, and dialogues. How many ways can we say, God has entered into world history and human life — He has become one of us?

In as many ways as possible.

I remember Flannery O'Connor short stories in which Christ appears under the guise of a serial killer, a crooked Bible salesman, and an outraged bull. And there are three films I wrote about years ago in an article called “Body of Christ,” — *Jesus in Montreal*, *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *The Bad Lieutenant* — where the director did not shrink from male nudity to demonstrate how fully vulnerable Jesus made himself in order to share our fate.

The back and front covers speak, I hope, to the unifying ideas of the issue. We are all children of Adam and Eve, exiled from Paradise, ashamed of our nakedness, facing the dark forest which we have created by our irresponsibility, our worship of false gods. The muscled Christ of the cover, from Michelangelo's Last Judgment, in all his strength and beauty, tells us that the Incarnation has worked, that God in Christ remains in our midst, ready to judge, but above all ready to welcome us, his brothers and sisters, into his eternal presence.

Our students who go to Mass, make retreats, or take courses in Jesuit history and spirituality learn the phrases “men and women for others” and “finding God in all things.” But integrating those phrases into the rhythm of their daily routines, where they hear God's feet pound the path with them on their morning run, or taste Him in the breakfast coffee, or encounter Him in a poem or history text, or see Him in a classmate's eyes, takes practice.

And each campus, our special photo-section demonstrates, has a place which, in some way, captures the spirit of the school — a building, tree, stat-

ue, classroom, doorway — where the student finds peace or experiences the sensation of belonging.

Perhaps these articles will call attention to those who are trying to open the eyes of our students to the arts, the environment, to the messages communicated in brick, stone, wood, steel, and glass by the buildings that embrace them.

They might also nudge the rest of us to examine our syllabi and our core requirements, and ask if our courses really prepare the young to deal with a world which is shrinking, where our lifestyle has put nature on the defense, where the movies, arts and music of other nations now seem foreign to our own but will inexorably influence how we see, listen, and feel.

But most of all, what about those students who can go through a Jesuit college or university and never run a mile, swim a lap, read Tolstoy or any “great book,” go to Mass, make a retreat, paint a picture, climb a mountain, visit a strange country, hear a Beethoven concerto, visit a museum, play a piano, sing a song in public, or dance on a stage?

Perhaps these essays and photographs will stimulate discussion on how we can integrate those elements of daily college life — intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and religious — that pull the young in conflicting directions. The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius Loyola teach us that all created things are good; our task is to use them insofar as they lead us to salvation. But salvation in this context is not merely the afterlife. It is a life of creative service to our fellow men and women.

As Christ, in Matthew's gospel, says at the Last Judgment, “Whatever you have done for the least of my brethren, you did for me.” ■

RASsj