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Letters to the Editor

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Letters to the Editor

Defending Bellab

I found Professor Danford's remarks regarding Europe to be disturbingly uninformed as they appeared in the fall issue of *Conversations*.

Using unsupported generalizations that would make an undergraduate blush, Danford describes "dying societies," "steeply declining populations," and "empty churches" in (that classic of "Rumsfeld-speak") "Old Europe." Nor does his indictment of European decadence stop there. He shrieks of the "shockingly wide-spread practices of euthanasia" and "sclerotic or moribund economies." Finally, Danford dismisses Europe's military establishments as being "made up of cooks and barbers..."

Do "dying societies" produce films such as those of Pedro Almodovar, Claude Chabrol, Jean-Luc Godard, and Jan Gogola? Does a moribund society produce poets such as Sascha Anderson and Rainer Schedlinski?

If western Europe's economy is in an advanced state of decay, how did the Airbus Consortium manage to deliver more transport planes in 2004 than did Boeing?

As for the "...shockingly wide-spread practice of euthanasia," in point of fact there are three countries in western Europe, Belgium, Switzerland, and the Netherlands which do permit assisted suicide. Does this qualify as "widespread?" Such permission does not exist in France, Germany, Italy or Spain, to name but four European nations. Here Professor Danford deals in half truth; the practice of euthanasia does exist in Europe, but "widespread?"

Danford is at his most uninformed and factually misleading when he claims that "the nations of Europe could not defend them-

selves if they had to..." In fact the armies of western Europe, primarily those of France, Germany, and Italy, are highly trained, technologically oriented military forces with very high rates of firepower per unit from the individual soldier to the regimental level. In the case of France, the army embarked on a long-range upgrade of its armored forces as early as the late 1980's, replacing the obsolescent AMX 30 battle tank with the AMX 30B. In addition, the French military has featured anti-tank and guided-missile-firing helicopters as integral parts of its weaponry. (See David S. Yost; *France and Conventional Defense in Central Europe*, 1985.) Retired Marine Corps general Anthony Zinni has nothing but praise for French and Italian military personnel in his recent publication, *Combat Ready*.

Professor Danford proceeds to wax indignant over criticism of the current U.S. administration: "That Dubya is such a simpleton!" In their recent publication, *Chirac contra Bush: l'autre guerre*, Vernet and Cantaloube report that in the months leading up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, French president Chirac offered some fifteen thousand French troops for the operation. They go on to explain that his offer was rather haughtily rejected by the Bush administration. Turning away military assistance on the eve of what was to become a difficult conflict hardly indicates genius!

Danford has taken on the role of spokesman for the neoconservative ideology which drives American foreign policy at this point; very well. However, the good professor would do well to craft an argument that is not reliant on misinformation and half truths.

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Reply to Janz

To the Editor:

The dismissive tone in the review by Denis R. Janz of Tom Beaudoin's book, *Consuming Faith*, seems the result of an unfortunate logic. The reviewer begins by introducing a question that, as he himself claims, is not the primary focus of Beaudoin's book. He then proceeds to review the book according to that question, and finds in his conclusion —unsurprisingly— that Beaudoin's book does not answer it.

We learn more about the reviewer's dislike for certain unmusical words and about his own take on the relation between Christianity and economics than we do about *Consuming Faith*.

Such reviews are not good models for conversations in Jesuit higher education.

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More on Saint Ignatius' Math

To the Editor:

I enjoyed reading Chris Petersen Black's article, "Saint Ignatius on Teaching Mathematics" (Spring 2005), in which she outlines her effective solutions to the daunting challenge of "teaching to the [Jesuit] mission." All too often it is assumed that education (on the life of Ignatius, the history of the Society of Jesus, Ignatian spirituality, etc.) is sufficient for the development of "leaders in mission." Unlike Dr. Black, new faculty may abandon attempts to "implement the univer-

sity mission statement" due to a lack of guidance and support—not because of apathy.

As a way of offering such support, Xavier University launched the Ignatian Mentoring Program (IMP). The IMP facilitates the assimilation of the Ignatian vision into the professional identities of faculty early in their academic careers and with teaching and scholarship responsibilities foremost. Thus, senior tenured faculty are paired with tenure-track faculty from the same college. Pairs meet regularly to discuss the Jesuit mission and identity as it relates to one's career, discipline and specialty. By the end of the year-long program, new faculty have incorporated a mission-driven teaching component into their courses and are able to articulate their scholarship in a manner which is mission-driven. Moreover, senior faculty have served as academic leaders and "mentors in mission" who affirm the Jesuit identity of the University.

The results from talented mentors collaborating with engaged new faculty are directly evident within the classroom. For instance: A member of the marketing faculty is helping students explore their attitudes about money, materialism, social responsibility and prestige seeking in order to enhance moral sensitivity.

After reading William Byron's description of "sympathetic imagination" in *Jesuit Saturdays* (2000), a legal studies faculty member is fostering skills in legal analysis, traditionally taught by case study, via role-play, discernment, and reflection.

In English, senior seminar, students are reading theological writings as well as literary criticism and fiction by C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Owen Barfield. This multi-disciplinary approach highlights the connections



Students create artworks in chalk at Rockhurst University.

between medieval literature, theology, and imagination.

In an upper-level theology course, an appreciation for human diversity is refined through heightened self-awareness. More specifically, meaningful inter-personal relationships are fostered from the examination of gender identity and the influences of religious and cultural norms.

Nursing students practicing in the field are giving class presentations on how they implement the Ignatian way/Xavier mission into their clinical experience.

Students in European history are learning about the origins of the Jesuits and considering the meaning of Xavier's Jesuit identity. In combination, students come to under-

stand how their own institution is a product of the ideas and ideals rooted in the history being studied.

When asked what was most memorable about the mentoring experience, an IMP participant stated, "*Deepening my belief that our Jesuit mission is what sets Xavier apart from other neighboring universities—as such, this mission must be an integral part of every course and every faculty member.*" In short, a "companion in mission" can be inspirational for "teaching to the mission."

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