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## Student Spotlight: Ben Cote

Editorial Board

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many hours for too little pay; expecting staff to do too much with too little in the way of resources; marginalization due to race or sexual orientation; denial of advancement due to gender; ignoring diverse voices on campus, for the sake of some institutional good; conservatives ignored on a liberal campus, reformers ignored for the sake of a comfortable status quo. Etc. If we do not face up to our complicity in powerlessness, poverty, vulnerability and exclusion where we live, we will be unlikely to live heroically with respect to poor people living on the other side of the globe or a thousand miles to the south.

To read *Manu* with my students is to encounter a literary classic, and to impart skill in reading, understanding, complexifying, and coming to terms with a religious classic. It is about discovering and struggling with religious power. This is the kind of thing professors should be doing for their students. It is also an act of self-improvement, practice in removing the shroud that obscures our ability to see and think honestly. If even on campus I cultivate and impart the skill (and gift) of a critical eye, the truth-telling tongue, the fearless pen, then boundaries will begin to break down. I will observe more clearly the ties interconnecting the richest and the poorest, the powerful and the weak, the detached professor, the passionate activist, the victim near despair. Teaching *Manu* fairly does not feed the hungry nor liberate the oppressed. But people who can read *Manu* fairly, with a cool and steady sense of what is good and bad in the text, the reading, and the reader, are those who will become able to read aloud all the other smaller and larger systems of iniquity in which we live.

Does this honesty let me off the hook, so I can file away Fr. Kolvenbach's lecture? Probably not. But if "being a scholar" and "having hearts with the poor" are both necessary, then teaching books like *Manu* remains one of the exercises we will need to undertake.

## Student Spotlight



Photo Courtesy of Georgetown University

A rising junior, Ben Cote is Grand Knight of the Georgetown University Knights of Columbus Council, which was named the 2002 Outstanding College Council, the order's highest honor for a college-based council. As a member of the Knights, Ben has participated in raising money for a local institute for the developmentally disabled, helped with diaper drives for a local pregnancy center, and has contributed to various service projects with local Catholic schools.

As a graduate of Cheverus High School in Portland, Maine, Ben served in Key Club during his senior year. He says he felt especially drawn to service in college after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, which took place at the beginning of his freshman year. On September 12, he prayed with a group of Baptist students on campus: "I grew a lot that day in terms of friendships ... and I also learned a lot about another person's religion." A double major in political economy and math in Georgetown College, he is considering pursuing a teaching career after graduation, or possibly attending graduate school.

As the son of a single mom, Ben knows his situation is not unique: "I'd like to be someone who supports single moms and encourages other men to be supportive, too," he says. He also plays saxophone in the Georgetown Jazz Band and serves on the College Academic Council.