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STUDENT VOICE

Contemplation in Action

By Jodie Foster

Since the tumultuous election season of 2016 drew to an official close following Inauguration Day, I've spent quite a bit of my time in contemplation. As Fr. Walter Burghardt, S.J., so lovingly puts it, contemplation involves taking a "long, loving look at the real." Think about that phrase – taking a long look at the real, truly encountering the real. And so I've spent the past week contemplating reality, both my own and that of individuals very different from myself. In words with perhaps a bit less poetic appeal than Fr. Burghardt, I consider it "acknowledging my privilege."

My privilege comes into play when I look at something as if it is not a problem just because it is not a prob-

lem for me personally. It is something I've wrestled with in my heart throughout my college years. My collective experience at Rockhurst has challenged my sense of reality and exposed me to new realities in more ways than I can count. It is nearly impossible for me to take in the realities of the world around me through the same, singular lens I did before stepping foot on this campus. Due to the opportunities granted to me through my service experiences, my many selfless professors, and my diverse group of peers, each day I am able to get out of bed and see the world at large through a variety of different lenses, not just my particular brand of privilege.

Reality has been called into question most recently for me through following my passions in non-profit and literacy. Now working with Lead to Read KC, an organization that pairs professional adults with urban core students once a week to read and share stories together, I see the realities of dozens of tiny faces that look much different from my own. I notice when they are tired or hungry or haven't been bathed in a few days. I see how these factors affect their everyday ability to function and perform, causing them to miss benchmarks. I realize that I took those same things as givens all my life. Most important, I realize that it isn't enough. My simple acknowledgement of a set of discrepancies does not change their reality.

The second part of my contemplation requires action. From one to whom much is given, much is expected. My seat at the table holds a lot of weight today, and so I am working to take action in using it as an agent of change for the marginalized rather than focusing on my own self-interest. In this way, compassion breeds compassion as our realities are melded together and I am able to see many different versions of "the real" with more loving clarity.

Jodie Foster is a senior from Kansas City, Mo., studying non-profit leadership and English at Rockhurst University. Some of her sources of joy include reading and writing poetry, listening to podcasts, baking, and road tripping.

