

LIM EXPRESS

LOYOLA INSTITUTE FOR MINISTRY

Loyola Institute for Ministry • Holiday 2009

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Best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

The LIM Faculty and Staff

Message from the Director

Thomas Ryan, Ph.D.

Normally, at this time of year, our thoughts in New Orleans turn quickly to Christmas, in part because our professional football team, the New Orleans Saints, has given us so little to cheer about in Decembers past. They have usually been well out of playoff contention by now. As I write late in the season, they are undefeated, and the entire city, it seems, is cheering them on. So, normally our focus would be not the Saints, but Christmas. This year it is both, and that seems appropriate.

Let me begin with a little background. You might think that the Sunday afternoon ritual of viewing or attending football games is the secular (and successful) analogue to Sunday religious practices. But the Saints, though odd, are religious themselves. First, the odd part – their helmets display not some fierce beast or marauder, but a flower, a flower commonly known by its French (!) name: *fleur de lis*, or lily flower. The team is named after holy ones whose excesses are more likely to involve self-denial than self-indulgence. Their fight song (“When the Saints Go Marching In”) sets to music a longing to join the blessed in beatitude. Their birthday is a Holy Day of Obligation, November 1, 1966. (Incidentally, this year All Saints Day fell on a Sunday, but, perhaps to avoid giving the Saints an unfair advantage, the NFL scheduled their game on Monday’s All Souls Day.)

I do have some qualms about American football. Like all forms of bread and circus, it can function as an opiate to anesthetize its adherents to pressing social problems. Surely the vast wealth and effort it requires could be marshaled to better purposes. It also glorifies violence; I didn’t realize how much so until this year as I’ve followed injury reports (there are so many!) afraid about who will be unable to play next week. So, beneath the excitement about Saints’ success lies concern for concussions, torn and broken body parts. (I’m also a bit hesitant to write about the Saints for an audience spread around the country and around the world. You may be uninterested in the sport or a fan of a rival, but your association with Loyola University *New Orleans*, in a sense, makes the Saints your team as well.)

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There is something eschatological about the Saints. They remind me of a phrase toward the end of the Seder meal's conclusion, "Next year in Jerusalem." This refers not simply to a particular place on a map but to a long-term hope that that city, indeed the whole world, will exhibit characteristics so well expressed by Isaiah's vision of the peaceable kingdom where "the wolf shall be the guest of the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; [and] there shall be no harm or ruin on all [God's] holy mountain" (Isa. 11:6-9).

New Orleans Saints fans have, likewise, been guided by patient hope. They have needed it since they did not have a winning season until their third decade; it took them twelve years simply to win as many games as they lost in a season. They have won only two playoff games. Tagged the Aints in 1980, they regularly manage to find ways to lose and thereby, as the saying goes, snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. So, the Saints resemble a hapless humanity, a humanity often unable to do the right thing. Yet, at the end of every losing season, loyal fans begin to make plans for next year's Super Bowl. Shut out of the playoffs in December 2008, I overheard some saying, "Next year in Miami."

The Saints' success has fostered the virtue of hope in other ways. In the year after Katrina, when it still wasn't entirely clear whether or how the city would come back, the Saints returned to the Superdome, won in rousing fashion and continued on to a winning season that included one of their two playoff victories ever. Their accomplishment gave hope; if the Saints could succeed in their return, maybe the city could as well. Their winning ways are bearing fruit this year, as well. It has established shared interest (and shared sartorial tastes for black and gold, the team colors) across economic and racial lines in this city that has too many lines dividing people from one another. The Saints have helped us to recognize our commonalities and that our differences need not divide.

And isn't that the point of Christmas – to remind us that God crossed lines, the traversing of which was previously unimaginable? It reminds us that God found common cause with us who are so different from God.

Also, Christmas, like a football season, is not a one-off affair. December 25 does not mark the end of Christmas but its beginning. The octave continues until January 2, and the season concludes on February 2, the Feast of the Purification. It is ongoing so that hopefully the extraordinary will have a chance to seep into and reconfigure the ordinary. It is ongoing because it's not just about God's approach in the past. As the liturgy says, "We [also] wait in joyful hope for the [future] coming of the Lord." Therefore, we have a future, one that is worth working to achieve. The lengthy Christmas season gives us time to realize this.

As with football, I have qualms about Christmas. Sure it's commercialized, but my qualms are rooted in Matthew's infancy narrative that is more tragic than joyful since it depicts a murderous ruler's quest to eliminate a rival. He fails and instead inflicts the fate prepared for Jesus on the Holy Innocents. As for Jesus and his family, they are driven into exile to live as strangers in Egypt. Thus there is more to Christmas than cheer. It has a prophetic edge and invites reflection on the implications of the Incarnation for immigrants and the victims of political persecution.

Yet, ours is a God of mercy as well as justice, and that is evident to us in New Orleans. It is evident in the magical run that the Saints are having and in the rebuilding that they have helped give impetus to. It is evident in the fact that it is much more difficult to take things for granted after Hurricane Katrina. New Orleanians now cherish and celebrate with festivals even the smallest elements of their lives and culture. And isn't that the point of Christmas? God became enmeshed in creation because it is good, it is sacred, it is to be cherished. God's humanity is good news particularly for the poor, the captive and the blind (Luke 4:18) and for all for us and our culture, including even its ambiguous institutions like professional football.

Please accept our prayers and best wishes for you and yours this Christmas, and thank you for your encouragement, prayers and support in 2009. May your New Year be filled with abundant blessings!



Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Ryan" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Thomas Ryan, Ph.D.

Director, Loyola Institute for Ministry

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News Notes from Cecelia

Cecelia M. Bennett, J.C.L.

2010 Commencement

The 2010 spring commencement activities will be held the weekend of 8 May 2010. The LIM liturgy and reception is on Saturday afternoon, 8 May, at 4:30 p.m. All certificate and degree candidates are invited to participate with their guests.

Facilitators have been sent by email information on the liturgy and reception and the other University commencement activities. They have been asked to email or distribute copies of the email to members of their groups. If your group is graduating in 2010 and you have not received the email, please email Diane Blair <dblair@loyno.edu>.

University Commencement for degree candidates for May, August, and December 2010 is on Saturday, May 8th at 10:00 a.m. in the Louisiana Superdome. Information will be posted by the university at: <<http://www.loyno.edu/ia/publicaffairs/commencement.html>>.

All 2010 degree and certificate graduates need to apply online at: <<http://www.loyno.edu/records/applicationfordegree.php>>. The university's reply to your online application will be sent to your loyno.edu email address. You may find your address on LORA if you do not remember it. Directions on how to do this are in the *Policy Manual* and on LORA.

LIM Office Closure

The LIM office will be closed beginning on 23 December 2009 and will reopen on 4 January 2010. The office will also be closed for Mardi Gras on 15 and 16 February 2010. Please remember these dates when e-mailing course registration forms to Loyola and e-mailing papers to the writing consultant service. Postal delivery will also not be available during these times. Please take this into consideration when mailing course assignments to the office or when expecting graded papers back from the office or from the adjuncts.

On the Road

LIM will be at several national gatherings and conventions over the next few months. If you attend any of these meetings, please stop by our booth for a visit and a treat.

- The Los Angeles Religious Education Congress: 19 – 21 March 2010
<<http://www.recongress.org/>>
- National Conference of Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) Conference and Exposition: 19-22 April 2010 – Las Vegas, NE <<http://www.nccl.us/>>
- National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM) Annual Conference: 2-5 June 2010 - Pittsburgh, PA <<http://www.nalm.org>>

Revision to University Grading Scale

Loyola University New Orleans has changed its official grading scale to include "A-" and "B-" grades which also changed the quality points assigned to each grade. One benefit is that students now have the possibility of getting an "A-" instead of a "B+" and the additional quality points for an "A-." <http://2009bulletin.loyno.edu/graduate/academic_regs/contents.php#grading>

As a result, the Institute for Ministry will be updating its course materials to reflect the new grading scale and quality point system. The updated course materials will be available online on Monday, 1 February 2010. Groups with due dates of papers on or after 4 February 2010 will need to use the updated grading scale when completing their end of course forms. A cover sheet has been added to the syllabi and facilitator manuals posted on the LIM documents web page to explain the transition. Dr. Ryan will be sending a more detailed explanation of the change to liaisons, facilitators, and students when we return from the Christmas break. In addition, students will receive a hard copy of the explanation with their graded papers. **[Back to Top](#)**

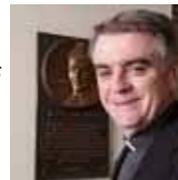
Upcoming Events

Eileen Hooper Chapoton, SFO

Rev. Gerald Fagin, S.J., Ph.D.

Scholarship fundraiser, book signing, book discussion and reception

Putting on the Heart of Christ: How the Spiritual Exercises Lead Us to a Virtuous Life is Fr. Fagin's book which is being released this spring. If you are in the area, please join us for the book discussion, book signing, scholarship fundraiser, and reception honoring him on February 28, at 7 p.m. in the Danna Student Center's St. Charles Room.



Lecture and Day of Reflection

Googling God: a free public lecture and a Saturday workshop for young adults and those who minister with them.

Mike Hayes, senior editor and founder of Busted Halo, *Googling God* author, and campus minister, will visit Loyola University New Orleans for a lecture and day of reflection on March 26-27, 2010.



For more information about these events, contact Eileen Chapoton at [<Chapoton@loyno.edu>](mailto:Chapoton@loyno.edu)

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The Loyola Institute for Ministry remembers Flower Ross (MRE '83)

The Loyola Institute for Ministry is mourning the loss of Flower Ross who received her Master of Religious Education from the Loyola Institute for Ministry in 1983 and who was a member of the LIM staff until 1986.

Flower Ross developed the model for the facilitator training and facilitator manuals that we use today in the Loyola Institute for Ministry Extension Program. Flower did all the initial facilitator certification workshops from 1983 through 1986 and developed all the facilitator manuals for the initial 10 courses in the program. She was married to Charles Winters who was teaching on the LIM faculty in New Orleans during that same time and who has also served on the LIM adjunct faculty.



1929-2009

Both Charles and Flower are in many ways the grandparents of the extension program. When they came to Loyola, they took the work that they did with the Education for Ministry Program (EFM) at the University of the South and used that to lay the foundation for the Loyola Institute for Ministry Extension Program (LIMEX). Without their vision and collaboration with other members of the LIM faculty and staff at that time, we would not have today the transformative learning model that we experience in the extension program.

With hope in the Risen Christ, we ask that you please keep Flower and Charles in your prayers as we mourn the loss of Flower and celebrate her life. What follows are some links about Flower.

[<http://www.episcopal-life.org/81831_117498_ENG_HTM.htm>](http://www.episcopal-life.org/81831_117498_ENG_HTM.htm)

[<http://www.mountainx.com/blogwire/2009/news_obit_lilian_ross_champion_of_episcopal_lay_ministry>](http://www.mountainx.com/blogwire/2009/news_obit_lilian_ross_champion_of_episcopal_lay_ministry)

[<http://obituaries.citizen-times.com/obituaries/obit.php?id=67677&PHPSESSID=1a7ef4327aa25095dbde98f87dd33087>](http://obituaries.citizen-times.com/obituaries/obit.php?id=67677&PHPSESSID=1a7ef4327aa25095dbde98f87dd33087)

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