

The Four Cornerstone Values of Service-Immersion Experiences

Simplicity – “The ability to simply means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.” – *Hans Hofmann*

Life can get complex. Sometimes we need to strip away some of that complexity in order to remember what is truly important. Participants of Campus Ministry Immersion experiences commit to a simple lifestyle. The commitment is more than an attempt to live without your cell phone or hair dryer for a week or two; it is a shift of focus. When away from home, we encourage you to spend your time centered less on technology, shopping and the consumption promoted by our U.S. culture so that you can be free to experience the value of simple pleasures, conversations, and your own creativity.

Social Justice: Social Justice is being in right relationship with one another.

Many people confuse social justice with charity. Charity is meeting the direct needs of someone who is in trouble. For example, if you are hungry and I give you my lunch today, I am doing charity. Charity is necessary and vital to keep people alive and safe in the moment. However, it does not fix anything permanently – so even though I give you a sandwich today, you will probably be hungry tomorrow. Social justice is looking to correct the root causes of an injustice by asking “why are you hungry?” and “what can be changed so you won’t be hungry again?” This is the more dangerous, complicated question, because in order to make society more just you need to understand the intricate systems of oppression that are operating in our world today and you need to commit more energy into trying to resolve them. Social justice is about creating a society where everyone is in right relationship with one another because of the fair distribution of advantages, assets and benefits among all members of a society.

Solidarity: “If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” -

Aboriginal activists group, Queensland

Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress you might feel when witnessing the misfortune of so many on your immersion experience. Solidarity includes compassion, but it is also a decision to take action to join with, to form community with, those who are suffering. Solidarity takes place when a person or community not only sees a need and acts, but commits to follow up, to endeavor to see that action is taken to improve the other’s situation for the long run. Solidarity then is the firm and persevering determination to act in favor of the well being of all, especially those who are most poor and marginalized.

Spirituality: A faith that does justice is the foundation of our trips.

All participants on our trips are called to be “contemplatives in action”; that is, to work actively for and with the poor and to be just as active in reflecting on God’s presence in our work and our relationships. We need to spend time with God, speak to God about our experiences and listen to how God interacts with the world through others. By trying to notice how close to or far away a situation is from God’s dream for the world, we feel spiritually called to do something about a situation and effect change in the world in behalf of the common good. Spirituality is a cornerstone value because when we spend time with God, eventually we will come to see the world how God sees the world. And then what breaks God’s heart will break our hearts and what gives God joy will be our joy as well. This is the firm foundation upon which we can effectively begin working for justice.