

## The Vision Behind our Immersion Experiences

“God calls you to the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

-Frederick Buechner

**Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.**, the former Superior General of the Society of Jesus, in his talk to the members of a Jesuit University in the United States in 2000, implored that:

*“Students, in the course of their formation, must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering and engage it constructively. They should learn to perceive, think, judge, choose and act for the rights of others, especially the disadvantaged and the oppressed.”*

**Rev. Adolfo Nicolás, S.J.**, the current Superior General of the Society of Jesus, echoed this sentiment in an address to Jesuit Higher Education Institutions in Mexico City in 2010 with:

*“the depth of thought and imagination in the Ignatian tradition involves a profound engagement with the real . . . the world as we encounter it; the world of the senses so vividly described in the Gospels themselves; a world of suffering and need, a broken world with many broken people in need of healing. We start there. We don’t run away from there. And then Ignatius guides us and students of Jesuit education, as he did his retreatants, to enter into the depths of that reality. Beyond what can be perceived most immediately, he leads one to see the hidden presence and action of God in what is seen, touched, smelt, felt. And that encounter with what is deepest changes the person.”*

**Based on the vision of these leaders, Campus Ministry at Canisius College hopes our International Service-Immersion Program will accomplish the following:**

**The purpose of Canisius College’s International Service-Immersion experiences** is to increase our awareness of the world, so scandalously unjust, so complex to understand, and so hard to change.

**The purpose of these experiences** is to fall in love and grow in solidarity with the people of the world and especially the poor, to let their stories become our stories, to let our voices speak for them.

**The purpose of these experiences** is to help where we are needed but to know that listening and being with is as important as anything we can do.

**The purpose of these experiences** is to challenge ourselves to live simply, to value relationships that we make, to engage our faith and spirituality in the experiences we have and to dig for the truth behind the injustices.

**The purpose of these experiences** is to go into the gritty reality of the world and find God there and to let this God of the poor, this God of justice and liberation transform our hearts so that when we return we can act in a way that we become part of the solution, that we become women and men with and for others.

## **Covenant of Participation and Behavior for Campus Ministry's International Service-Immersion Experiences**

**Although you are signing up voluntarily for this experience, the preparation process is lengthy and demanding.** For at least 7-months, we require participants to actively learn about their travel destination, their teammates, a variety of social justice issues and our four cornerstone values via workshops, trainings, readings, and events. This is also the time when you fundraise. These preparatory events are mandatory and your ability to travel with us is contingent upon you joining us.

**Once you leave to go abroad, remember that you are not on vacation—these kinds of trips are stressful!** We will be eating new foods, sleeping in tight quarters, being at the whim of someone else's schedule, struggling with a language barrier and will have limited contact with our families. All of these factors will challenge your ability to stay rested, positive, flexible and focused. However, that is exactly what we will expect from you. While participating on one of Campus Ministry's Service Immersion Experiences, we as representatives of Canisius College need to be responsible for our conduct. We need to be culturally sensitive, careful about our safety, willing to settle for less than the comforts we experience at home, flexible about our needs, willing to live by standards of behavior that perhaps are higher than in our home culture, and at all times remain focused on our reason for being abroad. **The success of our programs depends on a high degree of personal maturity and responsibility on the part of participants.** Therefore, every participant will be held accountable to:

### **Our Cornerstone Values**

Our service-immersion program is centered on the following cornerstone values:

- 1. Social Justice:** Social Justice is not only working alongside the underserved—it is committing to explore the causes of injustice and oppression and to take action on behalf of the common good. A commitment to justice involves challenging our acquired ways of thinking and feeling. It challenges us to allow the pain, anger and helplessness of others to have an impact on us. As privileged members of our society, we have a responsibility to seek to understand and help to change the structures that create poverty and oppression:
  - I will listen to and work with those who are more disadvantaged than I and will pursue solidarity with them
  - I will strive to become just in my own thoughts, language and actions
  - I will seek to know the truth of situations, rather than relying on my prejudices and biases
  - I will strive to explore the spiritual side of poverty and injustice
  
- 2. Simplicity:** While traveling, you will be forced to live without a lot of the comforts you rely on here at Canisius. To get the most out of this experience, we ask that you shed your desire for material comforts and the use of technology as a crutch for communication in favor of embracing the richness of a simpler lifestyle that focuses on building face-to-face relationships with others. Living the simple life is liberating and energizing because you become centered less on things and more on people.
  - I will seek the richness of life focused on people and their needs more than on my comfort or my acquisition of things
  - I will strive to remain open to differences of opinions and behaviors as they present themselves in the encounters with those of another culture
  - I will not seek to bring my ways, my food, my language or my mentality to the people I encounter, but rather seek to experience the richness of what is theirs
  - I will cultivate a positive outlook, realizing that cultural conditions may be more harsh and less comfortable than those I am used to at home

- 3. Solidarity:** When we are in solidarity, we are pursuing what is best not just for ourselves but for the common good. Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress you might feel abroad when witnessing the misfortune of so many. Rather, it is the firm and persevering determination to act in favor of the well being of all, especially those who are most poor and marginalized. This is a Gospel value and essential in working towards lasting peace. Solidarity demands openness, flexibility, tolerance, deep compassion and sustained action for justice for all.
- I will be open and honest with other community members and willing to share part of my life with them.
  - I will actively participate in the team's activities from beginning to end with an attitude of respect and working together for a shared goal.
  - I will seek to accompany the people I meet as a companion on their road to justice and liberation.
  - I will not seek to "accomplish" so much as to listen, learn and patiently plant seeds that may not bear fruit until long after I am gone.
  - I will commit once home to working in some way on behalf of the marginalized in this world.
- 4. Spirituality:** This international experience is an opportunity to interface your real world experiences with your faith. You will see and hear things that will make you feel uncomfortable – startling poverty, people living without hope because they are living without access to the basic necessities of education and health, countries who have been the pawns of the foreign policies of the United States. Living the value of spirituality means living as "contemplatives in action", reflecting on God's presence in all the gritty complexities of the world.
- I will allow the reality of my experiences to sink deeply into my heart and challenge my assumptions and will commit to growing in spirituality together with my team.
  - I will attempt to find God in all things, especially the gritty complexity of the world.
  - I will use our reflection sessions each night as a time to ask what my faith has to say about the situations I am witnessing and the people I am meeting and I will not shy away from bringing a critical awareness to the situation.
  - I will willingly pray with my team when the spirit moves us and respectfully attend any religious services my team is asked to go to.

**Personal Conduct** - Having a safe and respectful experience is our goal.

- **I will not make decisions that affect the group or the program independently of the team leaders.** Rather, I understand that I am just one part of a larger team and that following the rules and guidelines set forth by my leadership team will keep our entire team safe and healthy.
- **I will never go off-site on my own** for extended periods of time. Rather, I will always be with at least one other team member, and if we are going to be gone for long I will check with the team leaders to make sure they know where we are going and for how long.
- **I will never drink alcoholic beverages.** I understand that this is a service trip not a vacation.
- **I will neither bring, buy, nor use illegal drugs at any time.** I understand that if I violate this policy I will be sent home at my own expense.
- **I will not engage in sexual behavior.** I realize that engaging in sexual behavior could: 1) risk alienating those that we have come to visit, 2) raise questions about my motives to participate in this exposure trip, 3) jeopardize the integrity and future of Campus Ministry trips, 4) potentially cause division among those of the group, 5) potentially have lasting legal ramifications that I am not aware of, 6) and would not be consistent with the values of our Catholic, Christian college. Therefore, I will conduct myself with integrity in regard to my sexual behavior. I will not physically "couple-up" with another member of this group or with a local. I understand that if I violate this policy I will be sent home at my own expense.