

# Campus minister accompanies students at Loyola University



Faces of Faith

On the first part of an immersion trip 17 years ago to the Dominican Republic, then-30-year-old Seán Bray played card games with coffee farmers, delved into community discussions of Scripture and experienced joy and friendship.

Later in the week, the group moved to an area near the country's border with Haiti, where they visited two bateys, small residences where Haitians stayed while they worked the sugar harvest in the Dominican Republic.

At Batey Libertad, Bray felt hesitation at leaving the group's van, as he was already able to witness the severe poverty, but children rushed to the vehicle and pulled him out.

God, Bray said, was sending him an invitation. He taught in Catholic elementary education before switching to a role in youth ministry, and felt that the children were God's way of welcoming him to the situation.

## GET TO KNOW

Seán Bray

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What is your home parish?

*Corpus Christi, Bolton Hill*

Who had the most influence  
on the development of your  
faith?

*My mom was the one who gave me this gift, was very intentional about sharing that story, bringing me deeper into it, and was a tremendous witness.*

Who is your favorite saint  
and why?

*I'd have to say it's St. Ignatius Loyola now. St. Ignatius, over the last decade, has been someone whose life, inspiration and the spirituality that he helped foster has had a very deep impact in my life and has really challenged me to seek who God wants me to be.*

What makes you proud to  
be Catholic?

*There's something for me about the diversity of expression within Catholicism. Whether that's a charism or the way the Church looks in Bangkok, or Seattle or Baltimore. ... I've met so many people who continue to wrestle with what it means to be a faithful Catholic, living their faith out in the world ... (but) there's the hope that people continue to ask and wrestle and make God's love visible in the world.*

The life-changing moment came for Bray when the group arrived at Batey Dos, a village much poorer than the previous.

“I saw the cross,” Bray said, noting that at the time, he felt as if God was absent from that place; after reflection, he associates it with the crucifixion. “I just had this sense within me.”

He carries the inspiration from that trip into his daily life as director of campus ministry at Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore.

Immersion experiences are offered to Loyola students locally, domestically and internationally. Destinations include the United States/Mexico border in Arizona, where students work with the Kino Border Initiative to learn the stories of migrants and the ranchers who live near the border; Jamaica to work for peace and justice; and Baltimore faith centers, to learn more about different faiths and how they work for justice.

Bray said that in all of the work he does as a campus minister to Loyola students, who are approximately 73 percent Catholic, his favorite part is accompanying people.

“It’s less about talking at someone than listening for the questions in their lives,” Bray said.

Most of the campus ministry’s work, he said, is walking alongside students as they discern where God is in their own lives, and helping them realize they are loved by God.

“It’s a privilege,” Bray said of his work, where he often encounters students asking important questions about their faith, and strives to engage them in answering those questions.

“(Bray) listens and really considers student voices,” said Rachael Martines, a senior studying history and Spanish. “He hears us.”

Martines said Bray has mastered accompaniment, and meeting students where they are. When she came to Loyola, Martines did not care that the school was a Jesuit

institution, but now is an active member of campus ministry.

“My faith has really grown thanks to campus ministry and people like Seán,” said Martines, who will stay at Loyola after graduation to begin a master’s program in the art of teaching.

Bray and his wife, Shannon, moved from Seattle, Wash., to Baltimore for the position four years ago. They brought along their daughter, Larkin, and son, Liam, and welcomed their third child, Fíona, after the move. The family belongs to Corpus Christi in Bolton Hill, where Larkin recently became an altar server.

*Read more Faces of Faith profiles **here**.*