

Alicia Condon

Post Communion Reflection 2009

I am here today to give a short post-communion reflection on issues of hunger and homelessness. I am a senior here at Loyola University and have been working with the Center for Community Service and Justice since the first month of my first year. I've spent days and nights in the Baltimore community, working with and for my neighbors who are experiencing material poverty and/or homelessness, and who have known a reality that I cannot conceive. After going on four years of service and education based experiences, one would think I'd feel prepared and knowledgeable on giving this short reflection.

The truth of the matter, however, is that I know very little. I know little of the true gritty reality that is welcomed with cold streets and lonely suffering. Yet this fact, the fact that I know little, is the key to everything I learned.

What I have learned .. is to let those who know this reality to speak for themselves.

When I asked a man I met a few weeks ago who is experiencing material poverty and homelessness what he would like to say to the Loyola congregation, he replied: "We aren't all like they think. I've got an education. See this guy right here? He's got an education too. We're intelligent. I'm intelligent. All these people go on thinking that I'm not. But I went to school. It's hard out here."

Still another, "That's all it is: sowing and reaping. Just sowing and reaping. And you see, now, I've been sowing for a long time. A long time. And I think that's all I'll ever do. And I haven't stopped. I won't stop. Some people just are able to get all of God's graces. And don't get me wrong, the Lord blessed everything I have. So I'll just keep sowing."

When I asked another how his day was, he replied: "The Lord gave it to me. I'll be just fine. I'm blessed to be living."

And another, "It's cold out tonight. But I'm lucky to have a jacket. I just have to keep moving. Not everybody has a jacket. But I mean, you ain't gonna make it through the night if you don't have a jacket."

These are the words of our neighbors. Of men, real persons, like ourselves, who are educated. Hardworking. Faithful. and cold.

For our reflection tonight, I ask that we reflect on the words of the true experts. That we let the reality of hunger and homelessness wrap around our minds and our hearts, challenging and inspiring us to feel uncomfortable and feel passionate for God's justice. To feel the reality of the lives of our neighbors, persons sitting, and sleeping outside .. to let their reality be our own reality. For it is our own. We share in one united suffering. One kingdom of God. One, infinite love of Christ. And when we can listen to the words of our neighbors who are suffering from injustice; when we can listen and feel and believe their reality—we can channel that love, actualize that love, and live in that love.

As said by another friend downtown, "I want them to know that we are here. And I want them to care."

Thank you.