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As the Vice President for Academic Affairs and someone who has devoted much of my academic career to working with students, collaborating, worrying about them, teaching, and turning each student onto the love of learning and collaborative research, there is one simple message that I lead with – go out and repair the world! I remind students always that the purpose in life as a graduate from Loyola is simply this: to improve the world. In the Jewish tradition, this is called *tikkun olam*, literally “to repair the world.” *Tikkun* means “repairing” and *olam* means “world, cosmos, eternity.”

On a personal note, I was fortunate to know my maternal grandfather, Rabbi David W. Pearlman, who was ahead of his time and very much wanted to break down barriers within Judaism and across religions. He was ordained in 1933 at the Jewish Institute for Religion, a rabbinical college that was founded in the early 20th century to promote ministry, research, and community service for future rabbis of a range of different Jewish worship practices from Reform to Orthodox. In the 1940s, he was one of the founders of the Interfaith Council of Southwestern Connecticut, inaugurating Stamford, Connecticut’s first interfaith Passover Seder – still held today. My grandfather embraced diversity, particularly interfaith

diversity, and believed that we must engage in collaborative action to remedy injustice, inequity, and intolerance. In other words, he embraced *tikkun olam* and audacious hospitality.

In Jewish teachings, hospitality is considered a form of compassion, an act of righteousness or *gemilut hasadim*. There are many examples in the Torah (Old Testament of the Bible) of Sarah's hospitality to guests. Sarah's tent was no ordinary dwelling. Its doors were open to everyone and God's miracles abounded. A light would be lit from one Shabbat evening to the next. There was a blessing in her challah dough, and it would rise miraculously. Sarah believed that we must live our lives as if we, too, can change the world. The Jewish Midrash or Rabbinic literature teaches that the doors of Sarah's tent "were open wide" – a metaphor for her warm hospitality, conversation, and sharing. In his commentary on this Midrash, the Tiferes Zion, a 20th century sage of Jerusalem, explains that the "blessing" on her dough means that she was able to feed all the needy guests; there was always enough for everyone.

According to another interpretation, one of the unique features of Sarah's tent was that it was open in all four directions. This was so that Sarah and Abraham could see travelers passing by. How did they do this? Whenever Abraham saw passers-by, he would run out to greet them: "Come, sit a while, relax, have some food," and Sarah would prepare them elaborate meals. It was not a token of religious fellowship, but a demonstration of hospitality – a place for dialogue and sharing of another's experience.

The concept of Sarah's tent or hospitality is complicated as it is more than sharing food. Sarah and Abraham brought

strangers into their home, into a circle of compassion and concern, where they intentionally nourished them. Hospitality is not discriminating and welcomes all who come. Hospitality in the scriptural sense incorporates all the acts of kindness and takes precedence even over prayer. But more importantly, hospitality is a self-conscious, intentional act of inclusion.

Consequently, hospitality must be understood in the context of social justice and doing what is right in relationships. Hospitality means taking a chance that leads to turning strangers, newcomers, outsiders, those we do not understand, those who we might not always agree with, and those who have different backgrounds and customs, into friends, and transforming our own lives in the process.

In today's world and here at Loyola University Maryland, we need to recapture the essence and meaning of Sarah's tent by actively and intentionally inviting people to be themselves and to teach one another in the process. We must create buildings either actually or metaphorically not like standard cathedrals or synagogues, but like Sarah's tent – with doors and windows open on all four sides – welcoming people from all directions.

But, welcoming is not enough.

In my nearly 25 years in Jesuit, Catholic higher education, we have worked to welcome each other and to begin to create spaces for others' worship; however, we can do more. As a community, how do we come together as Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, agnostics, and atheists at Loyola? Going forward with this commitment to diversity, audacious hospitality, and *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, we should commit ourselves to inviting one

another in, to educating one another about our religious and cultural traditions, to celebrating another's experience with a community Shabbat dinner or shared Chanukah candle lighting or Buddhist new year's celebration, and to working together across religious, ethnic, and cultural traditions and backgrounds for *tikkun olam*, repairing the world.

With the Loyola University's mission and Jesuit and Catholic identity, I hope that we can be a catalyst for engaging diversity and inclusivity, fostering community-building action and conversation, for educating one another, for hosting celebrations that increase interfaith understanding, for creating safe and meaningful spaces for growing and nurturing multi-faith and multicultural relationships, and for advocating for communities and issues that are often overlooked.

Mission and identity can be difficult and complex concepts, yet in our community at Loyola, I believe there are multiple ways of contributing to the mission and multiple forms of identity that can embody the essence of Jesuit, Liberal Arts education. The work of audacious hospitality and justice is about outreach and inclusion; it is about collaboration and honest dialogue; it is about fostering and sustaining a vibrant and welcoming environment; it is about the collective power of a diverse community that works to make the world more just.