

## Sr. Catherine (Missy) Gugerty, S.S.N.D.

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As a child, Sunday afternoon rides with my family were the norm. We traveled many country, scenic back roads. Periodically we took shorter rides. Those rides took us into parts of Baltimore City where I saw first-hand where *the poor* lived. Images from those rides remain deeply embedded in my memory. As a high school student I went back into the inner city to volunteer at an outreach center not the least bit deterred by the Center's location. However, once I began volunteering I quickly discovered that driving through the city was quite different from interacting with those who lived there. Fortunately, I volunteered with kids, who, rich or poor, are cute and easy to interact with. My college years introduced me to soup kitchens and the *hungry poor*; people so poor that they couldn't afford to buy their own food. And that was when everything changed for me! Getting to know those who came for a meal I realized that "*the poor*" were much more than poor; they were individuals, men and women with names, histories, hopes and dreams that I could never have imagined. Suddenly, the term "the poor" seemed outrageously disrespectful, a very negative, one-dimensional label that didn't begin to capture the wholeness of these individuals.

Years later I worked in a shelter for *the homeless*. There I had a similar epiphany: *the homeless* were so much more than the term “the homeless” implied. And I wondered, how might things be different for them if we, as a society, abandoned terms such as “the poor” and “the homeless” and embraced phrases that first emphasized their humanity, a phrase such as “people experiencing poverty or homelessness”?

As members of a Catholic, Jesuit university community, we believe that God created all persons and that we are to treat each person with dignity and respect. The Loyola community is committed to the concept of “the whole person,” which includes body, mind and spirit. The Center for Community Service and Justice stresses that same concept as they prepare students to go out to the community and to be with her/his brothers and sisters. Names and labels play a significant role in how we approach another person or community.

As Loyola strives to better live our commitment to justice, it is my hope that we will remain conscious of and continue to promote the use of language that builds up and promotes the dignity of every individual or group of whom we speak despite how awkward the phrasing may seem at first.