A Distinctive Synergy of Message

I was involved in a very interesting conversation over lunch last week with faculty and staff of the Department of Integrated Media/Broadcast Studies. We were discussing the question of how the University’s mission gets communicated through their courses and programs. What makes a Gonzaga journalism or broadcasting class distinctive from one at any of our neighboring universities? Some ideas emerged about care and concern for the readers or listeners with respect to truth, attitudes towards others, and so forth – all very good. Then one of the professors mentioned how pleased he was when a student would pipe up in class that he or she had heard the same thing from another professor in class lately (presumably something related to mission). His point was that students are receiving the mission message from a wide variety of sources on campus, and this has a compounding effect on them. He called the phenomenon “a synergy of message”. Leave it to the experts in communication to strike the apt phrase! (I told him that I was going to use it in a moment for mission.)

The conversation continued along these lines. One of the other professors then raised a related point. Not only do our individual remarks or actions contribute to this cumulative message on mission, but our corporate or collegial ways of acting and behaving towards one another carry an equally important message. And a weak or non-existent collegial message can put the lie to or severely weaken the messages of many individuals. This thought reminded him of St. Francis of Assisi’s remark, “Christians should proclaim the gospel every day, even, if necessary, with words.”

It was a wonderful conversation and, it seems to me, was right to the point of Thayne’s words at the Spring Faculty Convocation regarding hospitality.