

Bringing you news and updates from the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

*Raymond Reyes, Charlita Shelton, Naghmana Sherazi & Dale Goodwin, editor*

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## Religious Diversity: Walking the Spiritual Path with Practical Feet

One of my favorite streams of consciousness with powerful reflective acumen by Pope John Paul II is when he challenged us with the following call for action: “A way must be found to discuss the problems posed by the future of humanity in a comprehensive and common language. The basis of such a dialogue is the universal moral law written upon the human heart. By following this grammar of the spirit, the human community can confront the problems of coexistence and move forward to the future with respect for God’s plan. The encounter between faith and reason, between religion and morality, can provide a decisive impulse toward dialogue and cooperation between peoples, cultures and religions.” This month’s Diversity Digest engages many of the reflections and aspirations articulated by the Holy Father offered to us so many years ago. Certainly the current COVID-19 challenges and provokes our faith, hope and charity.

If we call God “Creator,” and we believe in the Incarnational View that we are “made in the image and likeness of God,” then that makes us “creative.” As we experience the labor pains of giving birth to a new normal in adaptive response to the virus, we are called to be innovative and creative with discovering new solutions and practices in providing a rigorous Jesuit education for our students relevant to the times in which we live. The Virus World has turned the Human World upside down challenging all our assumptions and expectations about what constitutes a daily way of proceeding that makes sense to us.

In this issue of the Digest, you will find two articles which focus on “Religious Freedom” within colleges and universities across the

country. Now is the time to learn about other religions as well as learn from other faith traditions, all for a Greater Good. Since the 1970s, the educational value proposition of diversity has been a major imperative advocated by social justice activists. For a private, faith-based university, religious diversity in the Jesuit tradition supports our ability to animate the principles and practices of Catholic Social Thought.

This month we are fortunate to have Rabbi Elizabeth Goldstein offer a reflective piece on the holy days of Christianity, Islam and Judaism occurring closely this year; and Naghmana Sherazi shares an overview on her philosophy of Ramadan. This first day of spring, when life renews, also begins the Persian New Year; we wish everyone, Happy Naurooz. Here then are opportunities to “provide a decisive impulse toward dialogue and cooperation between peoples, cultures and religions.”

Any space, any occasion, any encounter that draws us closer to the heart of ourselves and of the other is a meeting place with God (She, He or It). Earth becomes heaven to the degree in which we let God love us through our lived experience. A condition of truth is to invite the suffering to speak. Social justice is what love looks like in public space. Aren’t these the ways in which we walk the talk of our mission?

Raymond F. Reyes, Ph.D.  
Associate Provost & Chief Diversity Officer (CDO)

## Message from Rabbi Goldstein, Mission & Ministry, GU

“What Christianity, Islam and Judaism (and not only these three) share is that we express our religious and spiritual needs most often in the context of an extended family. What does this mean for us now? I encourage us to explore the ways we can take advantage of this aspect of our faith traditions in new ways.”

Read more at: [www.gonzaga.edu/media/1C9D6CBDCC2A42088FBCA59E49DA7EA0.ashx](http://www.gonzaga.edu/media/1C9D6CBDCC2A42088FBCA59E49DA7EA0.ashx)



## Memories of Ramadans past

Growing up in Pakistan, I always enjoyed the special spirituality of the season. It is a time of introspective reflection and most people observing the fast follow not just the letter, but enter wholly into the sentiment of giving, patience, kindness and humility. It takes strength of will to stay engrossed in your work while you experience caffeine or nicotine withdrawals because you had tea or a cigarette hours before dawn, or while being sleep deprived because you spent all last night praying, since it was a special holy night that only comes round once a year. The point is

to feel the plight of those who are less fortunate, yet still manage to present a carefree, smiling affect, never asking for assistance. True empathy can only be felt when one has experienced a similar situation. Fasting in Ramadan goes a long way towards teaching or reminding you to stay grounded and humble.

Naghmana Sherazi, Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Read more at: [www.gonzaga.edu/media/79DF6F77399241A0985699A0E874346D.ashx](http://www.gonzaga.edu/media/79DF6F77399241A0985699A0E874346D.ashx)

## Do College Students Believe in Religious Freedom?

The overwhelming majority of college students say they want campuses that are welcoming to people of diverse religions, but those students also report not feeling appreciative of some students, especially Mormons and Muslims. That's one of the key findings of the *Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey*, or IDEALS, a collaborative project from researchers at New York University, North Carolina

State University, and Interfaith Youth Core, a Chicago-based international nonprofit that works to foster mutual respect among young people from different religious traditions and nonreligious philosophies.

Read more at:

<http://www.takepart.com/article/2016/07/26/religious-diversity-campus>

## “Happy Naurooz! Persian New Year heralds the onset of Spring”

The first day of spring, when life renews, also begins the Persian New Year, Naurooz. In my lifetime there has never been a more somber time for Naurooz than this year. Nevertheless, to one of the most resilient people, one of the most ancient tribes, one of the most loving, giving people, to all my Persian friends all around the world, Happy New Year, and may the coming year be filled with laughter, warmth, and love. I raise my glass to you all, my beautiful friends, wherever you are. Here is to hope. Here is to the new day. Here is to Naurooz.

– Nima Michael, Musician,  
Community Member



Ruins in the ancient city of Persepolis

## Tying Grant Eligibility to Religious Freedom

“Tying Grant Eligibility to Religious Freedom”, Proposed Education Department rule has higher ed lobbyists worried about possible loss of federal grants for public colleges over barring recognition of religious groups with membership restrictions.

Read more at: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/02/07/colleges-worry-about-implications-religious-freedom-rule>

## At Catholic Institutions, Tradition Propels a Commitment to Social Justice

Catholic colleges and universities have long promoted principles of social justice, inclusion, compassion and dialogue, even in the face of fierce protest. There are certainly winds of change impacting Catholic colleges and universities across the nation.

Read more at: <https://diverseeducation.com/article/146351/>



## Navajo Flatbread

Bread Shortage? This is the easiest kind of bread you can make: <https://beehiveshoppe.com/rooster-and-bee-blog/2020/3/18/bread-shortage-this-is-the-easiest-kind-of-bread-you-can-make>