



Office of the Vice President for Mission

TO: The Gonzaga Community
FROM: Frank E. Case, S.J. and Shanea Giroux
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A Fire That Kindles Other Fires

Faculty members, particularly in the STEM fields, often ask how they can incorporate mission ideas into their courses in an integral fashion.

This quotation from the Book of Deuteronomy recently struck me as germane:

Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your ears for you to observe.

Like the commandment of love in Deuteronomy, our mission is not something so remote that we will have to send someone overseas or into outer space to bring it back to us so we can hear it and observe it. It is already in our hearts and minds. If we search too far or too hard for it, we'll miss it. It is related to what is most specifically human in us, our capacities for reflection, knowledge, and love.

St. Ignatius is famous for his "*Ite, inflamate Omnia!*" (Go forth and set fire to the world). Several centuries later Pierre Teilhard de Chardin picked up on the theme of fire with his very inspirational quote: "Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire."

So what does this have to do with teaching a chemistry or math course? Our students come to us endowed with the divine sparks of intelligence and the capacity for love. In fact we all share these gifts. It seems to me that we are wonderfully fulfilling our mission if, in each of our students, we can fan these sparks of intelligence and love into the "fire that kindles other fires" (*General Congregation 35 of the Society of Jesus, decree 2*).

(See the last two paragraphs of the [Gonzaga University mission statement](#).)