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A Life's Journey through Fisher

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A Life's Journey through Fisher

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"I arrived on the St. John Fisher campus in September of 2000 as a relatively naïve 18 year old kid from a rural village in upstate New York that had more cows than people. Although my parents were socially conscious in their own way, I was not a very conscientious person in High School. My primary focus was on sports, friendships, and girls. But Fisher changed my attitude about life completely."



George Payne
(Class of 2004)

A Life's Journey through Fisher

I arrived on the St. John Fisher campus in September of 2000 as a relatively naïve 18 year old kid from a rural village in upstate New York that had more cows than people. Although my parents were socially conscious in their own way, I was not a very conscientious person in High School. My primary focus was on sports, friendships, and girls. But Fisher changed my attitude about life completely.

Coming in as a First Generation Scholar (under the visionary and heartfelt direction of Sally Vaughn and Dr. Dejesus), I spent my freshman year taking classes on English literature, American history, ancient and modern philosophy, and leadership development. For the first time in my academic journey I began to actually enjoy the process of discovering new ideas.

There are many remarkable professors at St. John Fisher College, and I can cite several classes that left an indelible mark on my thinking. I will never forget learning about the history of American warfare with President Bain, cultivating a life- long appreciation for poetry with M.J. Iuppa, and learning how to become a philosopher with Dr. Natoli and Dr. Brimlow. Perhaps my most important class was a seminar on saints taught by Father Costanzo. After being introduced to the spiritual legacies of Francis of Assisi, Edith Stein, Oscar Romero, and others, my perspective on religion- during a time when I was gravitating towards atheism- became more open and positive.

In the fall semester of 2004 I enrolled at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School. At CRCDS I continued to explore religious topics such as the search for the historical Jesus, liberation

theology, the philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr., and other subjects related to the fight for global justice. After completing my seminary program in Rochester, I went on to earn a Master of Theology degree (M.T.S.) from Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, GA, where I had the opportunity to work with many outstanding scholars in the field of philosophical theology.

My first professional job outside of school was a position with ACORN (Association for Community Reform Now) working as a community organizer in Charlotte, N.C. I was paid to go door to door in two poverty inflicted neighborhoods mobilizing residents to petition for safer streets, better policing, and increased voter registration. This was by far the most challenging experience of my life, but I would not trade it for anything.

In 2009 I married my beautiful wife Amy, who happened to live one floor below me in Haffey Hall while we were both freshman. Back in Rochester I was guided to Rochester AmeriCorps, and then to the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence at the University of Rochester. My placement and employment at the Gandhi Institute has been a dream come true. I am surrounded by inspiring people who love peace and justice, and who battle for causes that I truly believe in. I am also grateful to teach philosophy at nearby Finger Lakes Community College as a Visiting Adjunct Professor.

Reflecting on my years at Fisher, I now realize just how foundational they were in preparing me for the road ahead. My burning desire for learning ignited in the hallways of Basil and Kearney and the flame keeps growing today. If not for that class on saints I doubt that my passion for religion would have been rekindled. And most important, without Fisher I would not have met my wife! So when I consider the multitude of ways that St. John Fisher College has transformed my worldview and defined my career path, I am forever indebted to my alma mater.