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The "Life and Miracles" of Fisher Alumnus... Yesterday and Tomorrow

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Abstract

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

"Walking through the corridors of Basil Hall as a freshman one day, accompanied by my twin sister, Julie, I was stopped by a man of small stature with a gentle face. He peered through his tinted glasses, smiled and invited us to sign up for his "World Religions" class. At least that was what we thought we were able to decipher throughout the conversation as his thick Italian accent would take us quite some time to get accustomed to."



The "Life and Miracles" of Fisher Alumna...

Yesterday and Tomorrow

Walking through the corridors of Basil Hall as a freshman one day, accompanied by my twin sister, Julie, I was stopped by a man of small stature with a gentle face. He peered through his tinted glasses, smiled and invited us to sign up for his "World Religions" class. At least that was what we thought we were able to decipher throughout the conversation as his thick Italian accent would take us quite some time to get accustomed to.

Julie and I shrugged at each other and thought, why not? He seemed nice enough and the course sounded intriguing. One of the curricular aspects of St. John Fisher College that I had really looked forward to was the requirement that one had to take at least three religion and/or philosophy courses throughout the years of education. As a Baha'i I had always taken an interest in religion and had a passion for learning about different belief systems and cultures. In the Baha'i Faith a youth is encouraged to investigate different religions and to independently find truth. This idea of "an independent investigation of truth" had always made sense to me, but I was always too busy playing soccer to take the time to do it during the years of secondary education. College, I figured, would be a good time to look into religion and figure out what I believed, who I was and who I wanted to become.

Well, one class with Father Costanzo turned into several more within the Religious Studies Department, and when I got up to four courses Father Costanzo suggested that I might as well make Religious Studies a second major (my other major was Spanish). It was an easy decision for me because I had really enjoyed the courses that I had taken up to that point, and the faculty of the Religious Studies Department was supportive of me and knowledgeable about their field of expertise.

During the three years it took me to complete my undergraduate studies I took classes on all types of world religions; I visited a mosque, a synagogue, and various churches in the area. I completed two internships, one at a predominantly Hispanic Catholic church in the city assisting with Sunday school, and the other as an assistant to an Auxiliary Board member of the Baha'i Faith.

The knowledge about world religions that I obtained during my education at Fisher helped me get my first job as a Spanish teacher at a Catholic school in the Rochester area. Since then I have taken a position as a Spanish teacher in a rural middle school in Wayne County, and I find it extremely helpful to be able to understand and relate to my students and fellow faculty members who come from many different religious and cultural backgrounds.

Not only has my major in Religious Studies given me an advantage professionally, but it helped me grow spiritually and become more aware and appreciative of the beauty of diversity amongst us. What I learned in class confirmed my beliefs in the Baha'i Faith. The ideas of the oneness of God, the oneness of humanity, the oneness of religion, the progressiveness of revelation and the equality of men and women are beliefs of the Baha'i Faith that were reinforced for me throughout the various courses that I took.

Two years after graduating from St. John Fisher College with a Masters degree in Adolescent Education I still try to meet up with Father Costanzo every couple of months for a cup of espresso and good conversation about beliefs. His friendship and mentorship has had a profound impact on me, and it seemed only natural that he be the one my husband, Mike, and I would ask to read some inspiring texts at our wedding in December 2006. His faith in me and encouragement to take the next step and obtain a higher degree in Religious Studies is encouraging, but with a baby girl on the way, my husband and I will have to see where life will lead us to.

Kimberly Munding Chiapperini,
2003 Fisher Graduate

