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St. Mary's University and the Marianist Charism

As Marianist educators we are called to educate for justice and peace. For justice and peace are the earthly ends of Christianity, the cornerstones of building the kingdom of God here on earth. And as Marianist educators, that is the purpose of our vocations. We educate for justice and peace holistically in two different but equally important ways: on an inter-personal level, *inter-personal justice and peace*, and on a societal level, *social justice and peace*.

On an inter-personal and intimate level, we educate for justice and peace in how we treat others, whether students or colleagues. We model justice and peace in the respect we extend to others, each individual, and the dignity we value in all others. Do we treat our students fairly, kindly, compassionately, optimistically, and with grace. Do we treat ALL people – regardless of race, religion, high or low income, high or low social status – equally with justice?

We teach lessons through that modeling, lessons perhaps entirely divorced from our academic disciplines, but perhaps more important than our academic disciplines. Our students may forget the facts, formulas, concepts we teach, but they will never forget how we treated them and others. Those are lessons to be remembered for a life time; *inter-personal justice and peace*.

As Marianist educators we form minds and hearts and shape lives by helping students

find meaning, purpose, and social commitment in their lives. With our guidance, students discover that soulful meaning and purpose is found in living lives of service to God through service to others. While on an inter-personal level we expect our graduates to be models of justice and peace to all, on a broader and deeper level, we expect them to live out in their social actions and commitments a preferential option for the poor.

So we send them forth to work diligently in assisting the immediate needs of the poor, but also to labor at the long-term and much more demanding task of structural change; *social justice & peace*. For it is simply not enough to feed the hungry or house the homeless. We must continually ask ourselves and others why there are the hungry and homeless in the first place, and to remedy the structural causes of these and other injustices.

So to educate for justice and peace is to labor on both an inter-personal as well as societal level. It is a calling to search for justice and peace in all of our relationships and in all of our institutions and organizations. As Marianist educators, it is the call to labor in both fields, building the kingdom of God.

—Steve Neiheisel, Ph.D.
Chair, Political Science Department

