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New Executive Director Set to Take Over University Ministry

As Donal Godfrey, S.J. prepares to take over as University Ministry's executive director, he is looking to build on the department's accomplishments while broadening its reach through more retreat offerings and new ways of communicating with students.

John Savard, S.J. steps down Aug. 1 as executive director so that he can focus on completing his doctorate in the School of Education. He will continue working part-time with University Ministry, focusing on liturgy. Fr. Savard is credited with transforming University Ministry into a department that is both respected and valued for its promotion of the University of San Francisco's Jesuit mission.

"Fr. Savard has done a tremendous job as director, opening up University Ministry in many ways," said Fr. Godfrey, currently associate director. "I want to build on his leadership and respond to our new challenges. I love USF and am very excited to be director of University Ministry. The paradox is that it is precisely at a Jesuit Catholic university that we can find God's image in people whose color, faith, culture, language, background, and sexual orientation is different from our own. I want University Ministry to help celebrate that we are Jesuit, Catholic, and a place that welcomes those of all faiths and none, all at the same time."

One of Fr. Godfrey's goals as director is to further encourage interfaith dialogue on campus while helping people deepen their own faith, regardless of what it is. He sees no reason why USF can't become more Catholic and more Jesuit while also being more of a home for people of all faiths.

"I see my aim as helping people to be better, whatever they are," he said.

Fr. Godfrey believes the strengthening of University Ministry's popular weekend retreats is one way to accomplish this, as is the broadening of the retreat offerings. Potential additions might include one-day on-campus spirituality and faith formation retreats. Because many students are not able to spend an entire weekend attending a retreat, Fr. Godfrey believes shorter formats would appeal to more students. Eventually, he said, classes in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius would be a great addition to University Ministry's offerings.



Donal Godfrey, S.J. will take over Aug. 1 as executive director of University Ministry.

Continuing the department's strong ties with faculty and undergraduate academic programs also ranks high on Fr. Godfrey's list, yet he also wants to establish more of a connection with graduate students. The exact form that takes remains to be seen - Fr. Godfrey has begun talking with deans to learn more about the needs of graduate programs and how University Ministry can respond.

Whether working with undergraduates or graduates, University Ministry should examine the way it reaches out to students, Fr. Godfrey said. Students' use of technology has changed dramatically in the last several years, which means the department must consider reaching students with the technology they use. That might include using podcasts and Internet gathering sites such as Facebook.

"We need to be more imaginative in how we reach out," Fr. Godfrey said. "St. Ignatius of Loyola, he would have used podcasts if he were here today."

Fr. Godfrey already has seen the reach such technology can have. During his time at Loyola University in Chicago, he followed a student's suggestion and signed up for a Facebook page. The following Sunday, he delivered a sermon about Facebook and found himself spending the entire next day answering requests from Facebook users who had attended the service.

Ordained in 1992, Fr. Godfrey first came to USF in 1993 as a resident minister, adjunct faculty member, and associate director of University Ministry. He then journeyed to the Jesuit Centre of Spirituality in Belfast and also ministered to those marginalized by drug abuse and homelessness in Sydney, Australia.

Fr. Godfrey returned to USF in 2000 as a resident minister and led the Pedro Arrupe Social Justice immersion projects to the poorest neighborhoods of San Francisco and Tijuana, Mexico. From there, he joined Loyola University in Chicago in 2003 as the campus chaplain, a chaplain in residence, and an adjunct faculty member in the theology department before returning to USF last fall. ■

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