

# Nursing in the Jesuit Tradition

## *Cura Personalis* guides innovative program at University of San Francisco

by Sister Mary Brian Kelber, RSM, DNSc., RN  
Mary Lou De Natale, EdD, RN, CNL

University of San Francisco (USF) freshman Tom\* used to cross the street to avoid homeless people. That was before he started the school's nursing program, which made him realize he never considered what circumstances brought them to be homeless in the first place, such as substance abuse or a mental illness.

Another freshman nursing student, Michelle, says that her nursing class opened her eyes to the plight of women in Africa and India, many of whom have little to no access to health care. Before she started the program, Michelle says, she wasn't even aware of the issue, and now she is considering volunteering in Africa or India as part of her class work.

Both Tom and Michelle are part of an innovative new program at USF's School of Nursing called Nursing in the Jesuit Tradition.

While continuing to offer practical courses in traditional clinical nursing, such as how to perform blood draws

and lessons on anatomy, USF has integrated the Jesuit tradition of caring for the entire person, *Cura Personalis*, as an underpinning of its nursing program.

For the 105 incoming nursing students at USF last fall, their coursework included not only the standard requirements such as anatomy, physiology, and microbiology, but also courses on social justice issues in health care delivery.

The students participated in seminars that included assigned readings, group discussions, guest speakers, and field trips that focused on significant issues surrounding access to health care, issue advocacy, and ethical accountability in nursing. Seminar topics included discrimination in health care delivery and distribution of resources; vulnerable populations such as immigrants and the mentally ill; advocacy for those suffering from substance abuse and homelessness; and dignity in end-of-life care.

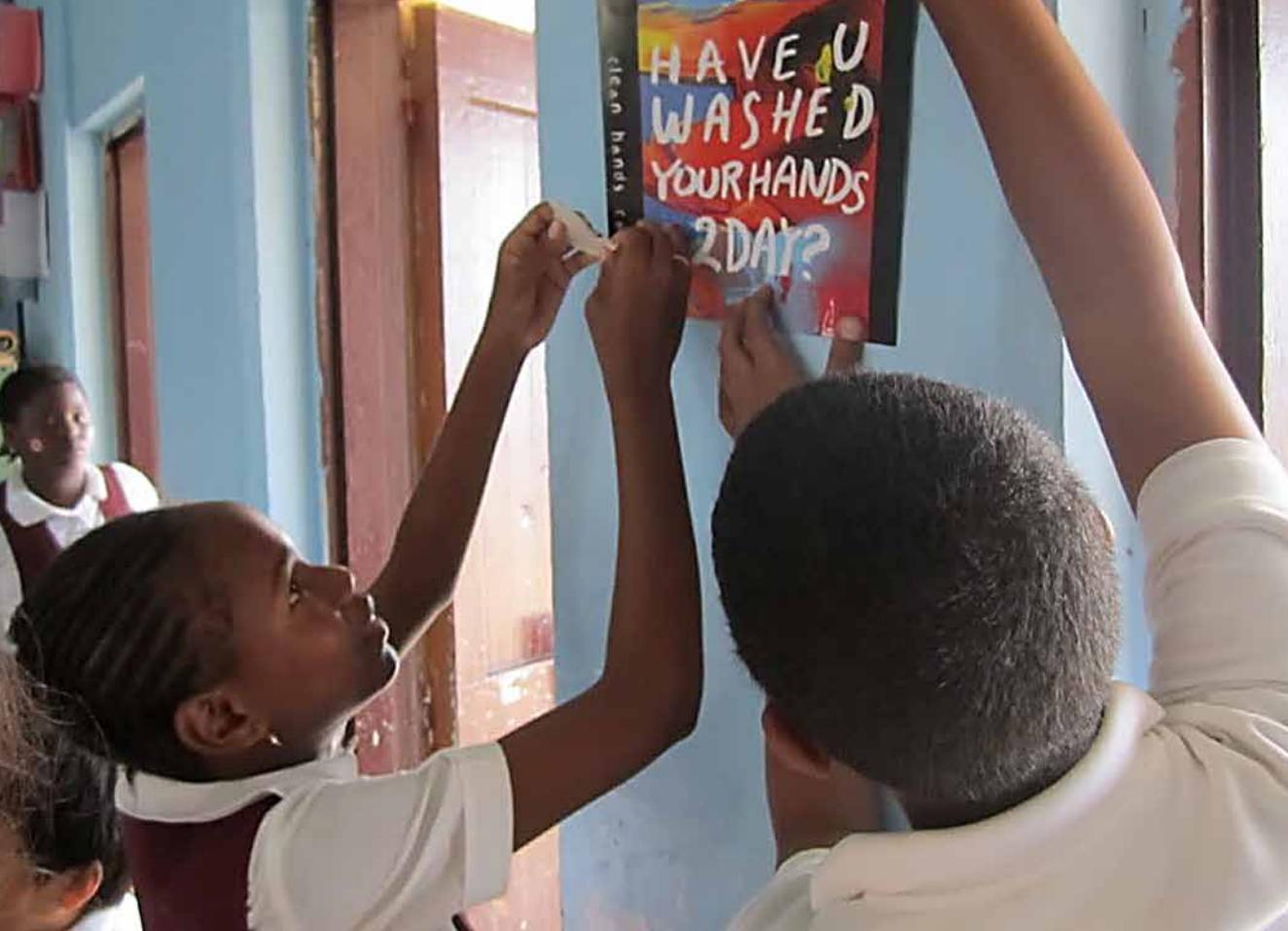
Understanding social justice issues and incorporating them into the nurses'

*A student from the Sacred Heart School in Dangriga, Belize, completes a handout on hygiene provided by USF students during USF Nursing School's immersion program. USF supports the Dangriga Health Advocacy Project at the school.*

professional practice exemplifies *Cura Personalis*—caring for the whole person, body, mind, and spirit. The nursing students are being made aware of the social issues and are building on their personal volunteer experiences and developing an awareness of vulnerable populations. Similarly, the students explore issues around end-of-life care and a holistic approach to the emotional and spiritual components of treating the terminally ill.

With its aging population, the U.S. is facing a growing gap between the number of nurses and the ever-increasing demand for them. Not only is the Baby Boomer generation placing an increasing demand on the health care system, the pool of current nurses themselves is aging. The average age of nurses is 49, and many are also retiring from the profession. The supply of new nurses to replace them has not kept pace. The School of Nursing at USF is not only helping provide qualified nurses, it is also educating these future nurses through

\* Names of students have been changed in this article to respect their personal thoughts and their privacy.



*(Clockwise) Sacred Heart School students put up posters on hygiene given to them by USF students.*

*Melissa Bettencourt, a senior USF nursing program student, leads a discussion on first aid with students at the Sacred Heart School.*

*Joel-Ryan Armamento, USF nursing graduate, works with students on a nutrition and food safety project.*

the lens of the Jesuit tradition of being men and women for others.

Even more acute are the needs of the developing world for health care professionals. The nursing shortage in Africa is making it difficult to combat diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. According to the World Health Organization's 2006 World Health Report, a shortage of more than four million health care workers in 57 developing countries—most of them in Africa—is hampering efforts to combat these three diseases. In the United States, there are 937 nurses for every 100,000 residents, compared with 114 nurses in Kenya and 21 in Ethiopia, according to the report.

**N**ursing students at USF hear first-hand of the global need for nurses from those in the USF nursing community. Dr. Phyllis Hughes, RSM, Marilyn Lacey, RSM, MSW, Mary Clark, FNP, and Dr. Shirley Tamoria share their experiences of working with the needy in Southern Sudan through Mercy Beyond Borders. Additionally, the nursing students at USF have the opportunity to work globally through immersion programs such as Project Learn Belize: Health Care Advocacy (started by Dr. John Savard, SJ, and Dr. Geoffrey Dillon, SJ), and other programs in Guatemala, Vietnam, and Africa.

Throughout the semester, USF nursing students discover they do not have to travel far in order to help people in need—there are many opportunities in the neighborhood. Dr. Donal Godfrey, SJ, told of his experience in working with HIV/AIDS patients in the Castro District of San Francisco, and students were encouraged to participate in USF-sponsored service projects in the Bay area. Students also volunteer to provide nutritious meals to the critically ill and homebound through Project Open Hand, participate in outreach to homeless teens in nearby Haight-Ashbury, and help at Koret House, which provides



Sister Mary Brian Kelber and Mary Lou De Natale, associate professors at the University of San Francisco, have designed and implemented the course Nursing in the Jesuit Tradition and are involved in clinical work in San Francisco Bay Area communities. Additionally, they support the nursing curriculum's focus on the dignity of the person and human rights of others. Kelber has been on faculty of the School of Nursing for 34 years; De Natale has been on the faculty for 18 years.

# Nursing Programs

AT U.S. JESUIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES



20

Number of U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities with nursing programs (out of 28)

8,000

Approximate number of undergrads currently enrolled in Jesuit nursing programs

2,000

Number of Jesuit undergrads who received a nursing degree in 2010

1903

Year oldest U.S. Jesuit nursing program was founded at Georgetown University

2006

Year newest U.S. Jesuit nursing program was founded at Saint Peter's College



*USF nursing students Justine Relos and Jamie Rey prepare for classroom instruction on hygiene at Sacred Heart School in Dangriga, Belize.*

temporary housing to families of seriously ill children receiving treatment at a nearby hospital.

“We can all contribute something to this process and help at least one person get back on their feet,” wrote nursing student Cathy. “There is so much suffering all around, and ignorance is not the solution, but awareness and social responsibility are.”

The themes are threaded in the nursing curriculum with a culminating seminar called Nursing in the Jesuit Tradition #2, which involves the nursing students working with those in the community who have special health care needs.

Freshman Phil summed up the goals for USF nursing students when he wrote in his final journal entry for his class: “This class has really opened my eyes to the real life issues and the major concerns of health care. It has taught me to be a more caring and understanding person—qualities that are excellent for being a good nurse in the future.”

**T**wenty of the 28 U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities have nursing programs—from the oldest at Georgetown University (1903), to Saint Peter's College, whose nursing program launched in 2006.

The nursing programs attract a large number of students and about 8,000 will be enrolled in undergraduate nursing programs at Jesuit institutions this fall. Last spring, just over 2,000 students received their undergraduate degrees in nursing at Jesuit schools.

The nursing programs continue to grow. Fairfield University is launching a new Doctor of Nursing Practice program this fall—the university's first ever doctoral program. Boston College was the first Jesuit school to offer a nursing doctoral program in 1988.

Often Jesuit schools have been the first in their region to offer various programs. Creighton University was the first nursing school in Nebraska to offer the doctor of nursing practice degree. When USF founded its School of Nursing in 1954, it was the first private university nursing program in California, and in 2007 the school opened the first doctor of nursing practice

degree in California. Loyola University Chicago's baccalaureate nursing program was founded in 1935, the first such program in Illinois.

Jesuit nursing programs include service to others. For example, Creighton University, through a collaboration with private and parochial schools in Omaha, provides health assessments for more than 9,000 children. This program enables children to get health assessments that are mandated by law.

Just this past spring, a USF nursing immersion trip to Guatemala to provide prenatal care became a disaster relief effort after Tropical Storm Agatha came ashore. Realizing the usual prenatal education needs had been overtaken by emergency relief demands, the group adjusted its focus to do what it could to aid relief efforts.

The nursing programs also focus on the future of nursing. Creighton University and USF were two of many Jesuit-affiliated schools to be national pilot sites for the Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) curriculum. A new nursing role, CNLs are master's degree-prepared clinicians with the skills for clinical leadership within a specific health care unit or area. As the demand for nurses grows, Jesuit nursing schools continue to respond to changes in the field.