

Catholic and Marianist Philosophy of Community Living

The University of Dayton is known for the strong sense of community and "warmth of welcome"¹ that permeates its environment. Less well known is the fact that the community established at UD does not happen by accident. Its foundation is deeply rooted in the Catholic and Marianist traditions which enliven this "family spirit" and make UD unique.

The success of genuine community relies upon the deliberate commitment every member of the UD family makes to engage in the hard work that it takes to build and to sustain community. The purpose of this document is to introduce some of the key principles, habits and questions that shape community living at the University of Dayton.

Understanding and integrating these principles and behaviors into community living situations is an integral part of the educational experience at UD. The principles and values described here serve as a foundation for the University Standards of Behavior and for the Community Standards process of developing healthy community living on campus.

Principles of Community Living

Community Living is an Essential Learning Experience

Living in community is essential to the full development and education of the whole person. The Marianist tradition values community living as the practical way in which Christians learn to live the Gospel, striving to love God, neighbor and self in daily life. In fact, all people, regardless of religious belief or faith tradition, learn essential life lessons such as self-awareness, communication, cooperation, mutual respect, courage, forgiveness, patience and trust from living in community with others.

The climate of acceptance that Marianists call family spirit presumes an attention to the quality of relationships among the people in the community. At the level of daily interaction, all members of the community treat each other with respect and speak with simplicity and openness. Over the long term, these daily habits acknowledge the value and dignity of every member of the community, and create the ground in which genuine friendships can flourish.²

However, building community requires more than friendliness, and is certainly about more than following rules:

Such a vision of community and friendship runs the risk of being romanticized. It must therefore be recalled that friendliness and hospitality are genuine expressions of a process that necessarily includes conflict, division, and all manner of human suffering and failing. Yet, those grounded in the Marianist vision of education recognize that only precisely out of this mix of joy and sorrow can genuine communities be formed.³

This genuine community requires maturity, commitment, self-sacrifice, and hard work. Through this kind of learning, UD students are more able to become people of great

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character and integrity who are prepared for assuming the responsibility of membership in communities throughout their lifetime and who can make a positive difference in the world.

The Dignity of Every Person

This Marianist vision of community living is founded on the conviction that every person has innate dignity because all people are made in the image and likeness of God:

*All women and men are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God's image; they have the same nature and origin and, being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny; there is here a basic equality between all and it must be accorded ever greater recognition.*⁴

This awareness calls us not only to respect ourselves and others, but to love ourselves and all people because of the human dignity each of us receives from God. Respect and love for self include making personal, social, and academic decisions that preserve and improve one's own dignity and well-being. Loving others includes the particular challenge to love and to respect those who are different from us. The presence of a wide range of perspectives, opinions, beliefs and the diverse people who represent them enhance the depth of the UD community and the ability of students to integrate the academic, religious, cultural, and social elements of their lives. The University Statement on Dignity states clearly:

*A primary assertion of both our religious and civil traditions is the inviolable dignity of each person. Recognition of and respect for the person are central to our life as a Christian and educational community and are what allow us to pursue our common mission while being many diverse persons.*⁵

The Common Good

The Catholic emphasis on the common good, another principle which shapes community living at UD, emerges from this conviction about the human dignity of all people. The common good is the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.⁶ This emphasis on the common good shapes values very differently from secular culture, which typically gives the freedom of the individual greater importance than the needs of others. A concern for the common good leads us to make individual choices in light of how they affect other people and the community as a whole. Our decisions and actions affect people on our floor, residence hall, house, campus, city, country, and ultimately the world community.

Furthermore, we are called to work actively to create and promote the common good at UD and beyond. This may involve challenging behavior which is harmful to others, or working to change unjust social structures which inhibit people from reaching their fulfillment.

Habits for Community Living at UD:

Through participation in the distinctive living and learning community at UD, students accept the challenge of moral development which will prepare them to live as mature members of a pluralistic society. There are certain attitudes and behaviors which stand out as effective means to internalize, live out and to exemplify this Catholic and Marianist vision of community. Growth in these areas is a life-long process. As members of this community, every UD student is responsible for understanding, developing and integrating the following practices and habits into their lives.

Take responsibility for integrating learning and living at UD

How can I make the most out of my time at UD ♦ academically, spiritually, socially, personally?

What wisdom does my faith tradition bring to my academic life and career path?

- Learn about the Catholic and Marianist views of life, which shape UD's values.
- Participate in the quest for wisdom and lifelong learning, not just job skill development.
- Inform and integrate your faith, beliefs, and moral living with your academic learning and living experiences.
- Develop an awareness of yourself as a whole person, paying attention to your physical, emotional, spiritual, social, and academic needs.
- Seek out mentors and models who will affirm and challenge your growth and learning.

Be honest, truthful, and live with integrity

How are my choices helping me to become the kind of person I want to be?

- Model moral behavior and virtue.
- Do not cheat. Do not assist a friend in his or her dishonest.
- Speak up when you witness alcohol abuse, drug use, violence, vandalism and behaviors that harm people and damage community.
- Respond truthfully and respectfully when your behavior is questioned by another.
- Act with honesty and respect in virtual/electronic communities and relationships.
- Be willing to change when you make a mistake.

Treat yourself with respect

Do I respect myself? How does my behavior show it?

- Seek relationships that bring out the best in you and others.
- Develop goals consistent with your faith tradition and your personal values.
- Don♦ abuse alcohol or controlled substances. Follow the law.
- Make choices which enhance your own safety, health and well-being.
- Develop a sense of reverence for the dignity of your own sexuality.
- Refrain from behavior which is insulting, demeaning, or harmful to yourself.
- Take seriously the wisdom of your faith tradition when making personal decisions (e.g. about alcohol, sex, drugs, honesty, etc.).

Take responsibility for self and community

What does it mean for me to contribute to the common good?

- Exercise self-discipline and take responsibility for your actions.
- Work for justice and peace to serve the most vulnerable.
- Learn to handle conflict with respect, dialogue, understanding, and forgiveness.
- Care for the university environment by keeping public areas clean and hospitable.
- Participate in creating solutions for problems which threaten the well-being of the community.
- Choose simplicity, reduce consumption, save energy.

Develop your faith life

Am I willing to be a part of a faith tradition that is larger and wiser than me?

- Take time to reflect, to pray alone and with others, and to worship.
- Reflect often about how faith contributes meaning to and challenges your everyday life.
- Study your religious tradition to deepen your, understanding, practice and commitment to it.
- Consider your life not just as a career path, but as a vocation, a calling from God. Consider
- Seek growth in awareness, respect, and understanding of the religious traditions of others.

Practice servant leadership

In what ways am I willing to be challenged and supported by others, to learn from someone who is different from me?

- Listen first to other points of view in situations of conflict and misunderstanding.
- Strive to be aware of how your actions can be of service to others.
- Practice humility and generosity of spirit.
- Be an example of generosity and selflessness with your gifts and skills.
- Assume leadership roles for the good of the community, not for advancing your own image.

The family spirit of campus life at UD depends on the commitment each member of the university makes to the shared set of principles and habits for living represented here. In the joys and the struggles of forming genuine community, students are reminded to draw upon campus resources and the support of faculty, staff and other students to make every situation a positive learning opportunity.

1. *Rule of Life of the Society of Mary*, (Dayton, OH: Marianist Press, 1984), article 8,
2. *Characteristics of Marianist Universities: A Resource Paper* (Chaminade University of Honolulu, St. Mary's University, University of Dayton, 1999), 36.
3. *Ibid*, 38.
4. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World in Vatican II, the Basic Sixteen Documents*, Austin Flannery, OP. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 29.
5. "University Statement on Dignity," University Of Dayton. Available at <http://www.udayton.edu/~diverse/StateDignity.html>.
6. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World in Vatican II, the Basic Sixteen Documents*, Austin Flannery, OP. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 26.