

Meet the Jesuit Connection

A recent headline in *Fast Company* magazine read: “Beyond My Space: New social networks mean business.” But that is far from what the three co-chairs Crista Carrick, Kelly O’Neil and Michael Mahoney are aspiring to create with the *Jesuit Connection*.

Crista Carrick, Kelly O’Neil and Michael Mahoney, three recent alumni of the College of the Holy Cross, found after graduating and moving out into the world, that the connection to “things Jesuit” was missing from their new lives. They, along with friends, have been meeting to continue the conversation about Ignatian spirituality. To put a framework around their experience, they are calling themselves the Jesuit Connection. The newly organized group has plans for both spiritual and social events and hopes to attract other young adults who have graduated from Jesuit institutions or have had other experiences with Jesuit teachings and values.

“I came to know Michael, Kelly and their parents, from my work with the Parents Council and the Reunion Program at Holy Cross. When I joined the Province last year, Fr. Tom Regan, SJ and John Mahoney, Chair of the Advancement Committee, asked me to meet with Michael and his girlfriend Crista, to talk about their ideas around



Kelly O’Neil, Crista Carrick and Michael Mahoney.

the engagement of young people in formation. We expanded the meeting and included a small group of young professionals. I had started the Young Professional Group at the Boston Public Library, so with their ideas and my experience, it helped us to create an exciting vision and plan for this group,” says Grace Regan, Executive Director of Advancement.

Crista, Kelly and Michael joined by alumni from Boston College, Fairfield University, Georgetown University and Nativity Prep met with Fr. Tom Regan, SJ, provincial and members of the Province staff in September at the McDavitt Center to outline the mission and goals for the organization.

Prior to the meeting we had an opportunity to speak with the three co-chairs.

Kelly O’Neil

Originally from Concord, MA, Kelly O’Neil graduated from the College of the Holy Cross in 2002, following a large family of Holy Cross alumni including parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and brothers. After Holy Cross, Kelly taught at Nativity Prep and pursued a Master in Education at Boston College. She is currently teaching history at Xaverian Brothers High School and is in the process of applying to doctoral programs in education.

Kelly says, “While at college there were always opportunities to pursue Ignatian spirituality. I participated and led Manresa retreats, attended 5-day spiritual exercises programs, was a Eucharistic minister, and with Crista, was a member of a weekly women’s spirituality group during our senior year.”



Front row: Ramon Gomez, Katie Guillard, Fr. Tom Regan, SJ, provincial. Second row: Kelly O’Neil, Kevin Cullinan, Fr. John Wronski, SJ, Michael Mahoney, David Soo, Grace Regan, Hudson Evei, Crista Carrick.

Kelly went on to say that after her friends entered their professional careers, they found it challenging to continue the connection with the Jesuit mission and value.

Kelly's goal for the Jesuit Connection is to build on the foundation which Holy Cross and other Jesuit institutions provide. She referred to the Holy Cross web site where their mission is described as: "building community through worship, dialogue, service, outreach, prayer, ecumenism, and the integration of living and learning."

Crista Carrick

Crista Carrick, originally from Wilmington, DE, followed her sister to Holy Cross, where she graduated in 2002. After graduation, Crista taught at Nativity Prep, is currently teaching at Christo Rey High School in Cambridge, and pursuing a Master of Divinity at Weston Jesuit School of Theology.

Crista remembers feeling "this is a family" the first time she walked on campus at Holy Cross. Crista appreciates the professional and spiritual development and guidance she received as part of her Jesuit experience at Holy Cross. While at college, Crista participated in 5-day retreats and in Got Dreams, a weekly prayer, conversation and journaling program based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Crista often finds herself going back to her journal for reflection. After Holy Cross,



Teachers, former teachers and alumni from Nativity Prep at the Jesuit Connection kick-off event

Crista was a volunteer with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) where she worked at St. Labre young group home in Ashland, Montana.

Her interest in the Jesuit Connection evolved through her work on the Jesuit Dinner committee with Kelly and Michael who were invited to host tables for young adults. "I see the Jesuit Connection as hosting events and activities which encourage people to go back to their Jesuit roots to create a network of people who are more than alumni. The purpose of our organization is not to solicit money, but to excite and remind participants about their Jesuit spirituality experiences."

Michael Mahoney

Michael Mahoney grew up in Dover, MA, and graduated from the College of the Holy Cross in 2000. After graduation from high school, Michael considered several colleges and although he was not pushed by his grandfather and father who were alumni to attend Holy Cross, once he visited the campus and interviewed there, he made his choice to attend.

Michael says, "The mission of Holy Cross and the way the Jesuit style of teaching and values translated the mission into everyday life and

volunteer work resonated with me."

After graduation, Michael worked at EMC in the investor relations group, received his MBA from Harvard Business School and currently works at Reebok, managing strategy and operations for the Rockport brand internationally.

Michael sees the goal of the Jesuit Connection as an opportunity for those who have had a strong experience with Jesuits to continue to access that and apply it in every day life. He is looking forward to encountering those who have shared that experience and re-engage with them on that level.

"This initiative comes at an exciting time, as we have just formally established The Jesuit Collaborative. This young initiative will help the Province and the Collaborative to create new and diverse opportunities for young adults to connect and to find ways to continue their growth spiritually within the Jesuit Connection. I am grateful to Michael, Crista and Kelly for their leadership and altruism," says Fr. Tom Regan, SJ, Provincial. ✝

The next event of the Jesuit Connection is an Advent Mass at St. Mary's Chapel at 6pm followed by a reception at the Burns Library on the BC campus on December 10. For more information, please contact the New England Province of Jesuits' Advancement office by emailing to: Advance@sjnen.org or calling 617-607-2890.

"A spiritual experience remains formless until it becomes aware of itself by being expressed and communicated."

~ Fr. Claude Flipo, SJ, in the 2006 Yearbook of the Society of Jesus