

My First Day

by Mr. Mario M. Powell, SJ

I never really thought about my first day as a teacher. When I arrived at Cheverus High School, Portland, Maine, to begin my regency, I went to the obligatory faculty meetings. I had lesson plans, but none of them included first-time introductions. I had a syllabus, but I had no idea what I wanted for my 123 students. I went online in a feeble attempt to see what other teachers do. I was told not to laugh until Christmas, not to be sarcastic and not to reveal too much of my personal life. None of it seemed practical, nor did it sound like too much fun. That was not the teacher that I wanted to be.

The next morning when my homeroom class came through my door, I decided that I would be me. I met 17 very young, very short and very timid freshmen and laughed out loud. I broke rule number one. In response to a question in my next class, I responded sarcastically. I broke rule number two. In my last class, I began telling the students about myself. There went rule number three. At the end of the day I realized that I was becoming the very Jesuits who taught me at my Jesuit high school. They

were all honest and true to themselves. They were confident, tough, fair and honest. They were silly and told awful jokes. They were real.

My greatest teachers were the ones who had an unparalleled ability to tell a great story, and they worked tirelessly to get their students to tell a great story as well. The story is me—us. I have learned in my second year of regency that while teaching history and theology are important, getting my students to access their innermost selves and to express that story is just

as important! At the same time, I work to gain the attention and respect of unruly, indifferent or typical adolescents. I am a Jesuit scholastic, a young teacher, a young man finding God in my students and praying that they can find God in me.

Mario Powell, SJ, is a Jesuit scholastic in his second year of regency, a time for Jesuits in formation to be fully involved in the apostolic work and community life of their province.



Photo: Dr. Gary Neilsen



Teacher and Musician

Mr. Thomas M. Simisky, SJ, second-year regent and teacher of theology at Cheverus High School, plays the violin with the school's string ensemble.