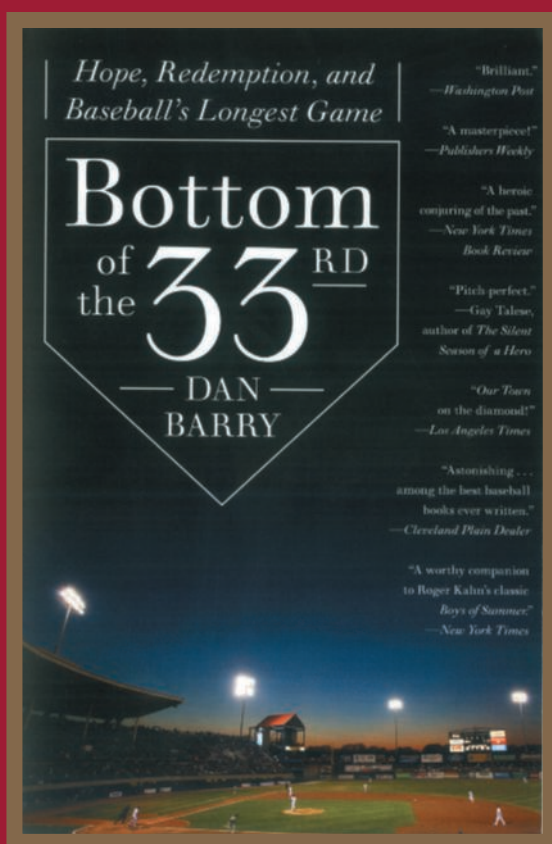


BOSTON COLLEGE

FINDING GOD IN ALL THINGS:

SACRED MOMENTS IN EVERYDAY LIFE



**FIRST YEAR ACADEMIC CONVOCATION
SEPTEMBER 13, 2012
WITH AN ADDRESS BY DAN BARRY**

GO SET THE WORLD AFLAME!



THE JESUIT MISSION

The early Jesuits struggled to describe what they called “our way of proceeding.” Their distinctive spirituality can be seen as a three-part process. It begins with paying attention to experience, moves to reflecting on its meaning, and ends in deciding how to act. Jesuit education, then, can be described in terms of three key movements: being attentive, being reflective, and being loving. It results in the kind of good decision-making that St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, called discernment. Discernment enables each of us to seek the greater good before us. Having this deep interior knowledge of the heart is to communicate with God and trust that the hand of God is at work fortifying and directing us in our lives. One of the many goals of a Jesuit education is to produce men and women for whom discernment is a habit.

We can think of discernment as the lifelong process of exploring our experience, reflecting upon its meaning, and living in a way that translates this meaning into action that creates a harmonious community for us all. We can also think of this process as something that we focus on with special intensity at particular moments in our lives, for example, during the four years of college or when we have to make important decisions. When we discern, we want to do so freely and with a sense of what God is calling us to do.

Through the practice of discerning, we grow in our ability to imagine how we are going to live our lives and discover our vocations. The novelist and theologian Frederick Buechner describes vocation as “the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” When we arrive at this place of convergence, we understand the fit between who we are and what the world needs of us; St. Ignatius urges us to be unafraid to live with the consequences of this realization and to respond with generosity and magnanimity, because this is the way that we can love as God loves.

We are not solitary creatures. From the womb, we live in relationships with others, growing up in cultural, social, and political institutions that others through the wisdom of their accumulated experience have created for us. To be human is to find our place in these relationships and these institutions, to take responsibility for them, to contribute to nurturing and improving them, and to give something back to them. Jesuit tradition uses the Latin word *magis* or “more” to sum up this ideal, a life lived in response to the question: How can I be more, do more, give more? Having the courage to seek this wisdom is an important step in how we lead virtuous lives.

It is certainly the hope of Boston College, as a Jesuit, Catholic university, that students will feel at home here no matter what their background and beliefs. You are at Boston College because you belong here, and this place is now and shall be part of your formation. From the multitude of experiences over the next four years, it is our hope that students will grow in expanding their hearts and minds, enriching their souls, and developing their talents, so they will grow in wisdom, faith, and love. Boston College also desires that students will come to know more deeply God's profound and abiding love for them and for all men and women, and that all Boston College students will make their choices in light of that love for God.



THE PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION FOR LIFE

The goal of our life is to live with God forever.

God, who loves us, gave us life.

Our own response of love allows God's life
to flow into us without limit.

All the things in this world are gifts of God,
presented to us so that we can know God more easily
and make a return of love more readily.

As a result, we appreciate and use these gifts of God
insofar as they help us develop as loving persons.

But if any of these gifts become the center of our lives,
they displace God and so hinder our growth toward our goal.

In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance
before all of these created gifts insofar as we have a choice
and are not bound by some obligation.

We should not fix our desires on health or sickness,
wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or a short one.

For everything has the potential of calling forth in us
a deeper response to our life in God.

Our only desire and our one choice should be this:

I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening of God's life in me.

A WAY OF PROCEEDING IN A JESUIT UNIVERSITY

Our perspective on the world affects our experience, and our experience becomes our sense of reality; therefore, this sense of reality influences how we interact with the world. If we see the world as a cynical or loving place, this perspective embodies and becomes our understanding of our surroundings. St. Ignatius of Loyola thought that the right vision comes from a trusting relationship with God who loves us.

To think about this relationship with a loving God is a spiritual, intellectual activity that we will ask all of our students to engage in as they embark on their individual and communal journeys here at Boston College. The choices and the decisions that we make through the course of our daily lives either draw us closer or move us further away from God. St. Ignatius of Loyola discovered God's love through his quest for self-knowledge and personal sacrifice.

Ignatius's own spiritual growth happened in response to a difficult and painful experience. In 1521 while defending the city of Pamplona against a French attack, a cannonball struck his leg, causing a severe injury. During his subsequent recuperation from two painful leg surgeries, Ignatius had a great deal of time to consider his life and what he truly wanted and desired. While recovering, Ignatius had access to only two books: the *Vita Christi* and the *Flos Sanctorum*. These literary works examined the life of Christ and the stories of the saints. From reading these two books, one of the things that Ignatius came to understand from his conversion was that he was created by God. This conversion made something stir within Ignatius's heart. This stirring inspired him to rethink his view of the world and of God. Ignatius realized that he was created by God for a purpose, as are all women and men.

This new orientation for his life and his new understanding of God provided Ignatius with a more authentic understanding of reality, which gave him a new vision of himself. Ignatius's vision of God was very tangible and personal. He had seen and experienced God in such a profound way that he was now able to truly find God in all places and in all things. This experience St. Ignatius describes in the First Principle and Foundation of the *Spiritual Exercises*: "All the things in this world are also created because of God's love and they become a context of gifts, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily."

When we understand that God is love, it is foundational for us to understand that God loves us completely and fully. In order to deepen our understanding of this, Ignatius asks each of us to reflect upon and contemplate God's love, which is the concluding prayer of the *Spiritual Exercises*. There is great value in reflecting upon all that we have within our lives: our family, friends, talents, and gifts. Through reflecting upon our experience, expressing gratitude, and having patience, we are better able to find and retain a perspective that helps us to shape and model our lives. In many ways, a Jesuit education helps to direct each of us to continuously listen to our own heart. Being in the habit of understanding and responding to our heart is how we become transformed and grow into people who we want to become and who we are meant to be.

As first-year students, you are embarking on a pilgrimage that has no set route but does have a clear destination. To be authentic pilgrims, each of you must engage in the intellectual and spiritual dimensions of the experience with an attentive, responsible, and loving heart. There are many roads and possibilities on this pilgrimage from which you must choose; however, to reach the destination, you need to live authentically — you must live the life that dwells within you. To reflect daily upon your authenticity enables you to discern the right direction to proceed. Like Ignatius, you make good decisions when you examine and attend to the relationships within your lives. This discernment needs to be at the heart of your decision-making.

FINDING GOD IN ALL THINGS

When St. Ignatius founded the Society of Jesus, he chose to create an order whose members would work wherever the Church and world most needed them. Ignatius was convinced that God deals directly with us in our experience. This conviction rested on his profound realization that God works in all things that exist; therefore, our intimate thoughts, feelings, desires, fears, and our responses to the people and things around us are not just the accidental ebb and flow of our inner lives, but rather the privileged moments through which God creates and sustains a unique relationship with each of us.

In finding God in all things, we discover sacred moments in everyday life — grace-filled opportunities to encounter God in nature, our relationships, our academic pursuits, our own stories, and in the stories of those around us. In these sacred moments, we realize our connectedness to God and how we are called to participate in the transformation of the world in both big ways and small.

As you begin your life at Boston College, we invite you to reflect on your own experience of finding God in all things and consider your individual desires by examining the hope and perseverance demonstrated by the people in *Bottom of the 33rd: Hope, Redemption, and Baseball's Longest Game*. Before reading this work, please reflect upon the following prayer by the late Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Pedro Arrupe, S.J.:



*Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is,
than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way.*

*What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination,
will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out
of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evenings,
how you will spend your weekends, what you read, who you
know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy
and gratitude.*

Fall in love, stay in love and it will decide everything.



To ask the right questions is to begin to experience discernment, which needs to be at the heart of all of our decision-making. We would ask each of you to ponder these key questions:

What stirs inside of you?

What are your deepest desires?

Where do you find God in your life?

A HISTORY

The First Year Academic Convocation and First Flight procession welcome each incoming class into the academic conversation already resounding throughout the Heights. The First Flight Procession that each student partakes in is an act of faith; faith that your classmates, the faculty, and the entire Boston College community will work together to engage a myriad of ideas that shapes your character, expands your intellect, and deepens your soul. As a student body, Jesuit community, and faculty collaboration, the event commissions all first-year students. In the same way that our freshman class is welcomed into the University, our seniors follow the same route on their commencement day, as they are set forth into the greater community of graduates, professionals, and alumni.



Convocation and Graduation Ceremonies on Linden Lane.

The First Year Academic Convocation looks to engage students intellectually, socially, and spiritually. As the tolling bells of Gasson Tower signal the start of the procession, the entire freshman class, gathered at residential halls, proceeds down Linden Lane. Each residential community arrives in front of Gasson Hall, the first building, built in 1913, on the Chestnut Hill campus. It is within this storied tower that the early Boston College students were asked to discover their own voices in what was originally called the Recitation Hall. As a committed community, we will empower each of you to discover and cultivate your own unique voice here on the Heights. To begin this pursuit, each first-year student is invoked by both a Jesuit and lay educator to “Go Set the World Aflame.” St. Ignatius gave this same charge in 1542 to St. Francis Xavier, who was carrying the Gospel to the East.

Traditions and rituals draw us into the experience of our lives. They also help us feel connected to something larger than ourselves. The First Flight Procession, the blessing, and the lighting of torches are all part of how we look to connect a 2,000-year-old Judeo-Christian tradition, a nearly 500-year-old Jesuit, Catholic order, and a 150-year-old institution, Boston College. As we feel part of something larger than ourselves, it is important to recognize the camaraderie and the companionship that we form among ourselves and how that connects to the alumni who have come before us. We also want each of you to come to realize that as members of the BC community, we believe in you. It is our hope that in the four years that pass between Convocation and Graduation, you will become attentive, intelligent, loving, and compassionate people who are committed to something greater than yourselves.

St. Ignatius attempted to model a life and provide a path alongside Jesus that would enable each of us to examine our lives in a tangible way to pursue the most profound questions. The Society of Jesus as well as the faculty, administrators, and staff are here to be your companions in contemplative action as you search for truths in your life and the world around you. Developmental psychologist Erik Erikson asked the questions, “Who am I, and how do I fit into this world?” It is through many conversations at Boston College that you will begin to answer these major questions in your life.



Torch lighting during First Flight Procession.

THE BOOK AND ITS AUTHOR

As the class of 2016, each of you will have the opportunity to read *Bottom of the 33rd: Hope, Redemption, and Baseball's Longest Game* and to welcome author Dan Barry to Boston College to discuss his work. As the subtitle of the book suggests, Barry uses the longest game in baseball history as a backdrop to tell the stories of hope and perseverance of the individuals who were a part of that historic night, inviting readers into the grace-filled moments of the everyday life of the players, managers, and fans.



The game of baseball is embedded into our nation's ethos and in no place more than in the city of Boston. The game provides a secular, but often sacred place, where the struggles, grief, joys, and exhilaration of the experience provide moments of self-transcendence for both the players and the spectators alike. Through Barry's description and narrative approach, this book invites the reader to search for inspiration within everyday life by suggesting that a personal encounter with God is within the grasp of humanity each day in this complex and often challenging world. If we identify the grace of God working within the lives of the people

within this book, we can begin to pay attention to the work of the Spirit within our own lives.

Dan Barry is a writer for *The New York Times* whose column *This Land* tells the stories of individuals across our country, highlighting the sacred moments in their everyday lives. These features bring readers to small towns and big cities, with tales about family-run car dealerships impacted by the changes in the American auto industry, towns nearly vanished from the map with the end of coal mining, the far-reaching effects of the Gulf oil spill, the last days of a death-row prisoner, the hometown celebration for an Olympic medalist, and Barry's personal story of his battle with cancer.

Dan Barry has won several awards, including the George Polk Award for journalism, the Pulitzer Prize for an investigative series, the American Society of Newspaper Editors Award, and the Mike Berger Award from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

Barry is a graduate of St. Bonaventure University and New York University and has written two other books, *Pull Me Up: A Memoir* and *City Lights: Stories About New York*.

A WAY TO APPROACH THE TEXT

As you enter into this Jesuit, Catholic University, we will ask each of you to engage in a conversation, to live together, and to share your life with one another. As members of the Class of 2016, your conversation will begin with this book, which invites us to consider the human condition by telling the story of the longest game in the history of baseball and the intertwining stories of the people who were a part of it. Set within McCoy Stadium in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, which is only forty minutes south of Boston College, the narrative and story are intrinsically linked to the neighborhoods that once prospered and have subsequently struggled. Even in the midst of this grittiness, hope and possibility are ever present.

Barry introduces us to people at every level of the baseball organization — the batboys, players, managers, owners, and fans — over the course of the 33 innings. Through their own recollections, we hear of the relationships, struggles, and triumphs by bearing witness to the sacred moments in their everyday lives. In these sacred moments, we see God in the fundamental human condition emerge in those relationships expressed through hope, perseverance, and failure.

As you prepare to read the stories of the players, managers, fans, and the city of Pawtucket, we invite you to consider your own story — the sacred moments in your everyday life as you reflect upon these questions:

As *A Pocket Guide to Jesuit Education* shows us, St. Ignatius was convinced that God deals directly with us in our experience. This conviction rested on his profound realization that God is “working” in everything that exists. Where have you encountered God in the people and things around you? Where might you have overlooked God’s presence in your everyday life? How can you be more attentive to God’s presence in the world around you at Boston College?

“Hope is an intimate matter” (p. 13). Hope becomes a central theme in this book — individual hope for a victory in this longest of games and for a chance in the major leagues, and communal hope for one’s team, one’s city, and one’s family. What are some of the hopes that you bring with you as you begin your time at Boston College?

Jesuit Father Timothy Brown once wrote, “Hope is not the same as that feeling that things are going well or that eagerness to invest in activities that are obviously going to succeed early on. Rather hope is the ability to work for something because it is good, it is right, not just because it is apt to be a success. It is

a way to orient our lives, a way to be part of building the kingdom of God that is anchored just over the horizon and within our hearts.” How do the people and players in Pawtucket sustain their hope? How will your hopes help orient your life to building God’s kingdom? How do you hope to pursue the good in your life at Boston College?

The baseball game at the center of this book takes place on “Holy Saturday, the awkward Christian pause between the Sorrow and the Joy”...(p. 3). As Jesuit Father Kevin O’Brien reflected, “...we know as Christians that the shadows of Good Friday will yield to the dawn of Easter morning. And so the suffering and death of Jesus must always be remembered and lived in context of the hope that springs eternal, the hope of Easter morning.” Where do you see redemption in the lives of the people in this book? Where have you experienced moments of redemption in your own life? Where does the hope of Easter morning live in your life?

“Hope, after all, is the motto of Rhode Island” (p. 132). What situations in the world today call upon us to have hope in the face of despair? With whom do we share those hopes? Who are the people in our world and in our lives who help bring wholeness to our own broken lives?

Throughout the book, we see examples of people who try; whether they meet with success or failure, they persevere. “Imagine, then, how many have dreamed of playing in the major leagues, if only as a backup to the backup catcher in the bullpen. Hundreds of thousands? Millions? Yet by the end of the 1980 season, just twelve thousand men had ever realized that dream. Twelve thousand; their bodies and ghosts would not fill a third of Fenway Park” (p. 13). Despite the odds of making it to the major leagues, these players continue to strive for that goal. What does it feel like to work toward such a goal, regardless of the outcome?

Mother Teresa once said, “God doesn’t require us to succeed, He only requires that you try.” How have you tried and failed in your life? How has that allowed you to be reborn? Are there moments when you have learned more from failure than success?

In telling their stories, these players often describe success in even the smallest victories. “In no way does this suggest that Steve Luebber will become some kind of baseball sad sack. For one thing, he will return to the major leagues a couple of months after this game in Pawtucket, if only briefly...he will have

won six games in the major leagues by the time his career ends, which is six more than most of us will ever win...honor is found in having come so close” (p. 108-109). Are there experiences in your own life that you see as failures? Do these experiences seem different in retrospect? Have you experienced joy in striving for something that you have not reached? Are you able to see success in having come close? To see grace in a moment after it has passed?

In a story about Bruce Hurst, Barry writes, “Here is a man who has the will-power not to succumb to the seductive clubhouse culture; who sets himself apart by knowing what he does *not* want to do with his days and nights. But this isn’t to say that Hurst necessarily knows what he *does* want in life; his consuming self-doubt is well-known in the Red Sox organization....Just three weeks ago, in fact, Hurst quit — again. After making it late into spring training with the Boston Red Sox, he was cut from the major-league roster and sent back to Triple-A. He returned to his apartment, wept, and decided to retire, even though he was only twenty-three. These were the ‘darkest days of my life’” (p. 172-173). As you begin your time at Boston College, how will you decide what you want to do? How will you persevere when faced with your own personal darkness? How does one listen to and discern their vocational calling?

Abiding commitment and perseverance is not only evident on the baseball field in this book, but also in the stands and beyond the walls of the stadium. Of the pact that he and his father made to stay through the end of the games, Danny Card said, “I learned what a promise meant” (p. 145). What does a promise mean to you? What promises have you made to others in your life? Are there promises which you have failed to keep?

“At one point Brex retrieves a foul ball that clatters in the gape of empty seats several rows behind him, the first he has ever snagged at a baseball game: a trophy. But racing over from the third-base side comes a boy, maybe ten years old and a few seconds late in the pursuit of the same foul ball. He looks at Brex with an expression that blends sleep deprivation with a baseball yearning, and what can the man do but surrender the ball to the boy. Then a young woman, either the girlfriend or wife of one of the Rochester players, notices Brex sitting alone, and walks over to hand him a cup of coffee. Two quiet, unifying gestures. Community” (p. 169). There are numerous encounters in the book in which people search for connectedness — both at the game and beyond. How are people connected in this book through God’s grace? In what ways have you reflected upon the multitude of connections that exist in your

own life? As you enter Boston College, to whom do you feel connected? Your family? Your friends? How will these connections change over the course of the next four years?

“Because we are bound by duty. Because we aspire to greater things. Because we are loyal. Because, in our own secular way, we are celebrating communion, resurrection, and possibility” (p. 14). Where do you connect into moments of sacredness within your daily life? How do you pay attention to those moments? How do you reflect upon them?

Sesquicentennial Mass at Fenway Park



As Boston College recognizes its founding 150 years ago, its Sesquicentennial Celebration will officially begin with a Mass at Fenway Park in Boston. The Mass is open to all members of the Boston College community — students, faculty, staff, alumni, and their families — and will be concelebrated by members of the Jesuit community and alumni priests. It will be followed by a reception that will include a walking tour of the ballpark.

This year’s Convocation book and address will connect into this Mass at Fenway Park. It is our hope that each of you will attend this special occasion that marks the start of Boston College’s Sesquicentennial Celebration by immersing yourself in the 100-year history of Fenway Park and the 150-year-old Jesuit tradition of Boston College.

As you enter into Boston College, we would invite each of you, regardless of your personal religious beliefs, to be open to the gifts of God's grace, which St. Paul refers to as the fruits of the Holy Spirit. These fruits are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

As we begin the school year and Sesquicentennial Celebration, we pray that the Holy Spirit continues to fill our hearts with the fire of God's love, which can better enable each of us to **"Go Set the World Aflame."**



CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

As you enter into this Jesuit, Catholic, liberal arts university, you must consider how we live in the 21st century and how the world is growing rapidly and changing in unforeseen ways. In the midst of this globalized and technologically driven world, we ask you to critically evaluate all that has come before us. To enter into the University core curriculum is to enter into a foundation of knowledge and experiences that will better equip each of you to synthesize and adapt to the ever-changing world that you are part of each day. Being able to read, write, and think critically will be important building blocks within your academic journey here at Boston College.

To fully embrace your Jesuit, Catholic education, you also need to consider how you will grow in your own understanding of faith. There are many conversation partners, including the Jesuit community, who are here to aid you within this journey and quest for understanding. Boston College hopes that each student will deepen their individual faith over the course of their years here. There are a number of sacred places within our community where you can go to contemplate and recognize God in all things.

We would encourage you to seek out these sacred places on our campus:

www.bc.edu/prayermap.

We would ask that you begin this path by reflecting on the following —

Patient Trust

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are quite naturally impatient in everything
to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way to something
unknown, something new.
And yet it is the law of all progress
that it is made by passing through
some stages of instability—
and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you;
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances
acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing
that his hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.

The Merton Prayer

MY LORD GOD, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

—Thomas Merton, “Thoughts in Solitude”

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What do you plan to do with the opportunity that awaits you here at Boston College?



As you enter into your first year of college, it is important to examine the decisions that you make while here at BC. Taking time to reflect upon your motivations, your desires, and your fears will give you a better perspective on your life—where you came from, where you are presently, and where you are heading. Boston College hopes to partner with you during this journey through the careful discernment of the intellectual, spiritual, and social components that affect you during your undergraduate journey.



Go Set the World Aflame!





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**CONVERSATIONS IN THE FIRST YEAR:
A PROGRAM OF THE OFFICE OF
FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE**