

Reflection shared by Jeana Greco (Omak, WA '09-10) during Liturgy at the winter JV retreat in Spokane, Wash.

Someone once told me, “We don’t have to know how to do something before we begin it...take action, do service for the sake of service, embody the world we want to live in.”

I believe that we all entered JVC Northwest in response to some call that we felt within our hearts. We each have our unique stories and reasons for joining, but sitting at mass in the gym at Orientation in Portland I could feel the common energy among us. I hope that you all have continued to feel that life-giving spirit within your communities and at your work sites. I know that I have.

Pulling up to a double wide trailer six months ago, I truly had no expectations of what the community of Omak would be like. I did not have set goals for things I wished to accomplish in my classroom nor did I have specific issues I wished to gain insight on in my own personal life. I learned very quickly though that even if I did, they would have changed.

I have recently been reflecting upon the cliché “you get what you give.” I think it is not quite that simple. The saying implies that the energy we put forth will be returned to us in an equal manner. It asks us all to give of who we are or what we have at a specific moment in time. But we all have different gifts, different strengths. We are individuals with unique talents. In the deep relationships we are able to create with one another there is no score card. These relationships are instead built on a foundation of trust and reliability.

A few weeks ago walking home from school I passed one of the other staff members. She called out to me and asked if I wanted to take home a cow heart. As a girl from New Jersey, I sincerely did not know how to answer that. Patty, a Native woman from the reservation, explained to me how she has just slaughtered one of her cows and was now offering me its heart. Realizing this to be an honor, I took the bag from her, returned to my trailer and wondered what I could give back to her to show my appreciation. But then I began to wonder why she had shared with me in the first place. She gave me part of who she is through a tradition in her culture. She and I have different customs, rituals, and beliefs. I can’t give or share with her what she already has. I have to share what makes up who I am for there

to be vulnerability and depth in our relationship. Looking back I realized our unique give and take added up to more than I thought. The times I sat and chatted with her at breakfast, kept her company while she made her rounds of the school early Saturday mornings, and shared meals that I had cooked with her, were ways that I was able to be the giver. They were moments of joy for me because they were ways through which I can easily express and define myself. But they were new for her, just as the cow heart was new for me. These brief moments of selflessness and generosity are what make up a relationship like this one, or any other that you have experienced through JVC Northwest.

If we all continue to give of ourselves freely and openly it will add up to be enough; to be life-giving for both the giver and the receiver. When we pour out our spirits, everything that makes up who we are, other people's responses will refill what we have let flow. And so will God. We actively responded to some force that showed us this path here in the Northwest. God hears our desires to be refilled with the things that are most important in this world. Simplicity. Compassion. Friendship. Love. These things that our world so readily dismisses and attributes such little importance to.

In today's readings, both Jeremiah and Luke present us with an alternative to the way many people live. Our faith and trust should be rooted not in the materials of this world, but in the promises of the next. When we delve into and thrive in the simple and pure fundamentals of life, we will be happiest. Isn't that what we are learning through the values of JVC, living in community, and standing in solidarity with the people who are teaching us so much. We are given a new lens for looking at old problems. Too many jobs emphasize outgoing products. As JV's we are challenged to focus on the intentionality of the incoming forces.

St. Ignatius of Loyola teaches us to discern and follow our heart's deepest desires. He challenges us to reflect upon what in this world gives us true consolation. For when we follow that path, we too will be following the path that God desires for us. When we go beyond material and tangible goods and base our lives on faith, communication, and love, then we live the way God intended for our lives to be. It will be evident in the ways we relate to other human beings. Trust your instincts, what your heart wants, it brought you to this year. Continue to have faith that it will bring you consolation in your decisions for where you life's

path will carry you next. Wherever you go, you will always carry with you the experiences, relationships, and challenges that your heart has encountered this year. They will continue to shape the person you are becoming. Hold on tightly to them.

So I ask you now to sit back and close your eyes. Let your mind take you to a place and time when during your experience this year, you received a cow heart: a moment when you were given a part of another person. It most probably will not be in the form of a five-pound animal organ but it will be just as real for each of you. Be aware of the way it made you feel. Be aware of the parts of yourself that you have freely given; the parts that then allowed you to become that specific receiver. Continue to be who you are and to give of yourself openly.

We all know a little bit more now than we did when we started. Keep taking action. Keeping doing service for the sake of service, for we are creating a world that we will want to live in.