



NEW RESIDENT CHAPLAIN

# Ready to Inspire and Be Inspired

This August, Canterbury was excited to welcome a new Resident Chaplain to its hilltop campus. Connecticut native **Father Brendan Horan, S.J.** has assumed the role after having taught political science at Fordham University and serving as one of two pre-law advisors for undergraduates in arts and sciences. Fr. Horan has advanced degrees in philosophy, theology, education, and law, and his areas of concentration are Constitutional Law, Human Rights Law, and Catholic Social Teaching and the Law.

As a “regent” in the Jesuit formation program, Fr. Horan taught history, Latin, and theology at Gonzaga College High School in Washington, DC. He also previously taught at Loyola University Chicago and Boston College and was a founding faculty member at the first Jesuit school in Nigeria—Loyola College—where he was a Theology Teacher and Dean of Students. He first visited the Canterbury campus last October to celebrate Mass in the Chapel of Our Lady.

We caught up with Fr. Horan for a chat before the start of the school year...

**After you visited campus to celebrate Mass last year, you reached out to us about the Resident Chaplain position. What about that visit made you want to be at Canterbury?**

I grew up in Connecticut, so I always knew about Canterbury but had never been there. During my first visit last October, I found people to be very friendly and welcoming. The altar servers were well-trained, the

music was beautiful—it was such a wonderful environment. The chapel is absolutely a jewel; architecturally, it is just gorgeous. And then I found out that the School was without a Resident Chaplain. That got me thinking and praying and discerning. I had been teaching for a number of years, so I wanted to see if I could combine teaching with the more spiritual duties of a chaplain as well.

In December, I came back to spend a day at the School, meeting Rachel and other administrators, faculty, and students in various groups and settings. That was very confirming of the Holy Spirit, showing me how I could be of further service to the Church and to the people of Canterbury. I also noticed the strong sense of community among faculty, staff, and students, as well as the alumni I met who have an ongoing commitment to their alma mater. All that was very appealing to me.

**What was your impression of our students? What do you look forward to the most about working with them?**

The students I met from that first visit and subsequent visits were very friendly, open, curious, and personable. In December, I had lunch with a group of students, and two of them took me around for a campus tour. I was very much struck not only by their knowledge but also by their love for Canterbury and the community, their sense of gratitude to the School, and their love and respect for their classmates. That is the real deal. You can get a very nice overview from faculty and staff, but the students are where the rubber meets the road. So that was very confirming as well.

It is joyful for me to learn and discover with students, to hear their questions and opinions and reflect on those things. Whether I have a large or small class, I always look upon it as a community where everybody matters. We learn best when we are committed to each other in this intellectual, spiritual, and social process of discovery that we share.

In the Jesuit order, working in schools is something we have emphasized since our founding. St. Ignatius would say that our goal—our mission statement, if you will—is the salvation of souls. We work to help people achieve their goals, find happiness, and contribute to the community, particularly those in need. As I get older, I realize that teaching young people also helps keep me young!

**These young people are just starting out and going through their teen years. Are you sure you want to live and work with high school students?**

Yes...at least, I think so! (Laughs) Some of my Jesuit colleagues have asked me that as well!

During our formation and training for the priesthood, most of us start out as teachers, and virtually all of us teach high school. It is an experience most Jesuits look back on fondly. You learn a lot in a very supportive academic atmosphere. The spiritual dimension is strong. Those are often some of our happiest years. So in a sense, I am returning to where I began, only this time knowing—hopefully!—more than I did before. It doesn't matter whether someone is 10, 13, 17, or 20. That is just where they are. Students are students; the focus is on inquiry and learning and developing our gifts irrespective of one's age. People who are intellectually curious are a wonderful group to engage with.

**Kidding aside, what are your thoughts on the importance of the adolescent years for developing values and character?**

Those have always been formative years, but in some ways, these last 20 to 25 years—with all the stresses in our society and social media and so forth—have put even more pressure on students to grow up early. You are not so much a young person as a mini-adult. So these years are more important than ever for forming values and a desire to learn and discover, growing spiritually, seeing how things connect in our lives, and understanding responsibility to self, family, friends, community, and church.

Many high school students begin to realize their passions and focus on developing and sharing their gifts. It is also a time when people are encouraged—sometimes pushed—to discover gifts they did not even know they had, whether through theater, school clubs, athletics, or service opportunities. You are exposed to so many different people, ideas, and settings.

Canterbury has such a supportive community where everyone is known, belongs, and is cared for, and that helps students form good values and a commitment to service that last a lifetime. It is a privilege and blessed opportunity to share together. It can also be challenging,

but as our Lord says in St. Luke's Gospel, “To whom much is given, much will be required.” Those words make more sense to Canterbury students because they see it playing out every day in the lives of their classmates and teachers and dorm parents and administrators, and they begin to think, “Oh, okay, I understand what that means now.” It is an exciting time.

**What excites you about our interfaith community and the distinct ways we support each student's individual faith journey?**

I find it wonderful to help students who have their own ways and traditions to hear the voice of God and feel the movement of the Spirit. We can meet students where they are and take them further down the road of discipleship to see the many ways that religion—whatever one's traditions—is about a community of people who gather and care for each other and are committed to high ideals of being and serving and doing.

That is strongly reflected in the schools where I have served. Fordham is a Jesuit-Catholic university, for example, but welcomes people of all faiths and traditions—or even no faith—to help them grow holistically, realize their connections to others and the community, and cultivate a desire to serve. So that is something I am very much used to. The Catholic and Jesuit faiths help provide a framework for understanding human beings—our aspirations, our desires, and how we deal with questions of identity or setbacks or tragedies. It gives us, as St. Ignatius would say, “a world view” and makes us interested in and respectful of questions, ideas, and experiences of other people who perhaps do not share the same condition.

It goes back to starting with the student as an individual. As the Judeo-Christian tradition teaches, we are not saved as a group; it is one by one by one. That is important to remember, particularly in the ministry of education. Students bring their own stories and desires and perspectives that must be appreciated and nurtured—and from what I have seen, Canterbury does that very well.

**What do you bring to the position as a teacher, mentor, and spiritual leader?**

I bring my background, my experiences, my faith, my training, and my interest in people. I bring my desire to serve and help others grow spiritually and to learn from them as well. And it is not just with students; I want to be a presence to staff and faculty as well—to be available to help individuals or families or groups. I can share my world view, my spirituality, and my faith in the church and in the goodness of people.

As a teacher, I enjoy what I am doing and hopefully that is felt by students. We are on a journey from the first class to the last; an exciting journey to learn together as we go. I have been deeply enriched by these experiences with my students, many of whom I continue to hear from over the years. That is always very affirming, and I look forward to continuing it here, God willing.