

Welcome to Multicultural Week. I especially want to welcome back the juniors who have just returned from the March Coed Encounter, and their senior leaders. You have infused our school with your love, and with the Holy Spirit. Thanks so much.

I am now going to reveal one of the Encounter secrets for the freshmen and sophomores. It is actually not that much of a secret, because it is a reality that we all know, if we are keeping it real.

One of the biggest secrets the juniors learn on their Encounter is that everyone has hard stuff they carry—even people who seem to have it all together. We all have family struggles, and we all feel lonely sometimes, and we all have self-doubts. Most students worry about their grades, and right now we are all feeling a little anxious about the coronavirus....

So, let's lift each other up, celebrating the many gifts, and recognizing the burdens, we bring to Jesuit each day.

If you read the school paper last week, you saw two articles by senior Shawna Muckle, one of our finest student writers. Shawna calls all of us—administrators and faculty as well as students—to be more racially literate, to learn to walk in each other's shoes during Multicultural Week, or Black History Month, or Women's History Month (which is this month, by the way). If you are a guy who looks like me, it is hard to understand what it's like to walk in a world that is filled with racism, and homophobia, and sexism. But I can try.

We can learn by talking to one another, walking through the Refugee Simulation, or reading *American Born Chinese*, or *House on Mango Street*. Developing empathy and becoming a person for others is what our Christian Service Program is all about.

Jesuit schools have always been multicultural. Look at the flags in lower Elorriaga and the Gedrose Center. Over 70 countries have Jesuit high schools! You are going to see some dances from India today. Did you know that India has over 360 Jesuit high schools, almost all of them majority Hindu?

In recent months in the US, and around the world, incidents of racism, of anti-Semitism and anti-Asian bigotry have spiked in disturbing and unacceptable ways. Just this weekend, someone brought a Nazi flag to a Bernie Sanders rally. Now, if you are not Jewish, as Mr. Sanders is, you may not be able to understand the implicit violence and generational horror that symbol conjures. In the past few weeks, there have been anti-Chinese sentiments expressed by people in US, connected to the coronavirus.

And even at Jesuit, we have had the swastika appear over the years. We have had students use the "N" word on campus. Too often, people who think they are "joking" say racist or sexist or homophobic things, trying to be cool. But it's not cool. It cuts deeply.

We have to fight against such evil. We have been talking a lot lately about contagious diseases, about infection. Racism is an insidious, hateful, corrosive infection in our world. Just like you can choose to protect yourself and all of us against infection by taking common sense steps for the common good, you can do the same to protect against racism and bigotry.

So walk through the Anne Frank exhibit in the PAC. Go to this week's brownbags with Dr. Shamieh and Mr. Hoffman to learn more about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and prospects for peace. Most of all, when you are tempted to utter or post a bigoted comment, don't. Don't spread the disease.

The penultimate stop in the Anne Frank exhibit says this: “Young people have played a major role in creating social change for the better, from Anne Frank to Malala. They have marched for equal rights during the Civil Rights movement, organized peace demonstrations in Colombia, made art to oppose human rights violations in Asia, and founded radio stations to oppose intolerance in Europe.” Some students in this room participated in the Climate March in Portland, and engage regularly in activism for a better world.

Most of all, celebrate and cheer today and this week when your courageous classmates share their cultures, with dance and food and language and light. That is a gift, and we should thank them loud and long for that gift.

Jesuit, be the light that overcomes the darkness. Bring your best selves, and help make this world, and our school, a bit brighter. Thanks.