"Breezewood to Nazareth, an Oriental Muffin for Father Leo Meyer, and an Art Historian in Strange Country"

Annual Catholic and Marianist Education Lecture
College of Arts and Sciences
University of Dayton

April 4, 2008

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I think my subject is international education. I equivocate because I am not as certain as I once was that what we conventionally call international education is or should be strictly that. My lecture is about figuring this out, maybe even giving new form and meaning to what we do at this Marianist university both here and abroad.

I begin with this familiar and funny image:
Drawn by Saul Steinberg, this is a very individual, New Yorker’s view of the world. An image less celebrated, but better known to this audience, is this:

![Image of a drawing by Saul Steinberg](image-url)

It is an early, late nineteenth-century drawing of our University, a place then called Nazareth. What unites these images is that they are both about specific places. More importantly, they are about the relationships between those places and places much further away. Steinberg pokes fun, maximizes New York, and minimizes every place elsewhere. He makes those distances seem very far, almost unbridgeable, and well beyond any New Yorker’s will to bridge them. Our image maker—let’s call him the Nazareth Master—is much more descriptive and certainly less opinionated, . . . or is he? Knowing that he is describing a place called Nazareth, he keeps Nazareth close, so close indeed that there is no need to reference explicitly any distant elsewhere. But it is there. It is there in the paradoxical closeness and distance of a far away place and idea that is the opinionated subtext of the image. That opinionated subtext is really the subject of my talk.

Many of you can predict that in addition to Steinberg’s New York or our Nazareth, I am likely to insert my Florence and to see the rest of the world in relation to that city:
Like Steinberg and our Nazareth Master, I hope to use Florence not strictly as site but as laboratory for testing an idea I have about international education. My intent is not to be comprehensive. Like Steinberg, I wish to be editorial, even parochial, hopefully provocative, and ideally catalytic. And like our Nazareth Master, my desire is to depict without over definition what I think ought to be implicitly understood about our University’s distinct purchase on the world. What I can tell you is that it was Father Leo Meyer, to whom I gave an Oriental muffin in my title, who inspired me in Florence to put the positive equivocation to my former certainty about international education.

On the eve of joining this College, my father-in-law gave me this advice:
He told me that I could get away with giving a bad paper at a conference, but I could never give a bad paper at my university. Hopefully you’ll agree that I’ve held to his wisdom in some, if not all, of the papers I’ve presented on campus. My subjects have ranged from my own area of expertise, Renaissance Florence, to topics much further a field. I have talked to you about Degas’s bronzes, the Wright brothers and photography, Hitler’s visit to Florence, the book as physical object, and the art of Barnett Newman. At the very least I hope that I have amused you. After all, I work in a building, the Rike Center, that was once identified as “Amusement Hall” when this place was more commonly called Nazareth:
Here I show an old map of Nazareth, and here is my building, “Amusement Hall”: 
My problem now is that my father-in-law never amused me with any advice on what to do when your institution asks you to speak on nothing less than its Catholic and Marianist identity. And he certainly didn’t amuse me with any pointers on how to follow such first-rate thinkers as Chris Duncan, Jack McGrath, and Una Cadegan.

This is not my first time at temerity and vulnerability. I once stood on this very stage and questioned the unity of faith and reason in Christian art. Remarkably, I did so even with this man in attendance:
I suspect that Father Heft gave me latitude because I was talking about my discipline, art history, even while dealing his, theology, most superficially. Today, with international education, I’m again talking about a subject with which I and many of you have been associated.

If Father Heft’s presence once scared me, his example now inspires me. Father Jim has often discussed the seeming opposites of faith and reason. Working very loosely with his model, I will address a different set of opposites, the local and the global that likewise are not always talked about together:

![Image of local and global contrasts](image-url)

In focusing on the local and global, I’m really following up on points that Chris, Jack, and Una made in their addresses. But wait, you might say, while Chris talked about community and Jack about Marianist education, both applicable to my topic, Una was the Miami Valley girl, so to speak, who spoke more locally of Dayton as a place:
That she did. But Una never fails to surprise and Una never fails to open up even the smallest topics to the largest implications. “Digging deeply into any place,” Una voiced, “immediately connects you to many other places, maybe to every other place.”

Dayton and every other place. Una’s connections of the local and global have actually been with me since the time when I made my first steps toward this campus. I traveled from Italy to interview for this job in the Midwest:
I’ve never been a great believer in culture shock, especially when you are returning to a place where, more or less, you grew up. But was I ever in for a shock of things local and global. The trip home began with a pass through Venice, that great amalgamation of here, there, and everywhere:
It took me first to my doctoral institution, the University of Pittsburgh, which is majestically though oddly presided over by an art deco cum Gothic Cathedral of Learning in steel town America:
From there, it just got stranger. The conference was in Washington and this required a trip down the Pennsylvania turnpike. Traveling with my advisor, I was busily reading Edward Said’s *Orientalism:*
Said’s book is that postmodern, hipster bible about cultural convergence, center and periphery, and the “Other.” Indeed, it is about the local and the global. I was reading Said because my advisor told me that if I had any prayer of getting that Dayton job, I’d better know something more about the sexier bits of academia than just Renaissance Florence. A ways into Said, we made the de rigueur stop at Breezewood, that most Venetian of American crossroads:
There we dined (term used loosely) at the Gateway Restaurant:

Imagine my surprise when we were served a local pastry called an Oriental Muffin. “Even Breezewood,” my advisor exclaimed “has more sex appeal than you!”
From sexy Breezewood, we headed to the conference. I interviewed with my future colleagues in a hotel suite that looked rather Louis XIV in décor. Somehow I pleased, and I was invited to campus where things local and global continued to converge:

At UD I was introduced to a Marianist university that had been started by members of a French order with very un-French names like Meyer and Zehler. I met with a Dean who talked seamlessly of farm life in Ohio, 18th century France, and listening to reports from Vatican II on the radio in the student neighborhood:
I was then taken to lunch in KU where I was served a Chinese-Hawain chicken salad served rather spectacularly in a half pineapple:
This fusion entrée, long since retired, was followed by a visit to the Marian Library. There I puzzled over representations of Mary that looked like this, and this, and this, and this, and this:
This was all in a place where Marianist brothers once exchanged not only a medal of St. Joseph, but they did so with a Scotsman. Furthermore, those same brothers had their own audacity of hope to translate and transport, if only through nomenclature, this north American glacial
I soon realized that the Oriental Muffin I had eaten in Breezewood must have been some kind of fortune pastry presaging occupational odyssey through the local and global with this Marianist place. Una was right, even well before I met Una Cadegan.

I would say that I rather set aside this unexpected cross-culturalism I first encountered at UD for much of my early career. It just seemed more curious than central to what I was about. I taught my courses here on campus and, in the summers, I taught in Florence:
I even admit that when asked whether I taught in the summers, I would routinely respond “no.” What I did in Florence just didn’t seem like work, or at least not like the same teaching work I did here on campus. My colleagues and I taught classes that really were there, arose from the content of that place, and were not replications of what we did here. We purposefully separated ourselves from Dayton, this place, and this curriculum in order to focus on the foreign place at hand:
Gradually, however, this began to change. First, I worked with Betty Youngkin and Una Cadegan. Oddly, though presciently, both taught subjects—Betty Shakespeare, and Una American Studies—that seemed to be not so much about Florence as about places and people elsewhere. I learned from them about comparative internationalism and my sense of Florence began to change in a new convergence of the local and global. And then, these last two summers, I worked abroad with good friends in Engineering:
In Florence, we focused on engineering problems that international modernity exerts on the Renaissance city. This past summer I also began a research project on the international dimensions of Florentine Renaissance art. I began thinking about why, for example, there is a Turkish carpet in this altarpiece:
More generally, I began thinking about whether Florentines, when they made and looked upon any and all examples of their art, saw behind it the international underpinnings of their entire culture:
“The world is made up of five elements, the medieval Pope Boniface VIII once asserted, “earth, water, air, fire, and Florentines.” Last summer Boniface’s quip began to take on new, meaning, racing back and forth through history, as I looked at Michelangelo and as I worked with my engineering colleagues to understand the impact of global warming, global pollution, and global tourism on Michelangelo’s city:
My teaching and my research in Florence were not only connecting with one another but they were doing so with places and realities both near and distant from where I was. The very local things that we care about, teach about, and send students out to serve here in Dayton, began to take on a pressing presence in my international work in ways that had never happened before.

This realization of the convergence of the local and the global came to me while I was simultaneously observing a Florence in dramatic transition. Florence is becoming an international city, with new cultures and peoples and problems in new contact with one another in ways that have not yet settled out comfortably for all:
What was particularly notable was how these changes are unsettling Florentines whose livelihood is based on Florence as timeless Florence and not on a Florence that is metamorphosing into a very different and very hybrid place. This looks like a traditional Florentine store:
It is, however, owned and operated by Vietnamese. Florence seems no longer exclusively under a Tuscan Sun:
Instead, it is becoming more like another, familiar spot in an increasingly flat world:
This flat world Florence is a sensitive, politically-charged topic for anyone to address. For me, someone who has published on the racist ideology and imagery of Fascist Italy, I am deeply reluctant to resist and condemn, even to photograph, the increasing poly-cultural nature of what is no longer Michelangelo’s Florence or even the Florence I first knew.

I recognize that this is not a situation completely new to the modern moment or to modern Florence. Italy, dangling into the Mediterranean basin, has always served as a great diasporic corridor throughout history:
I am also aware that this situation of complex, problematic change also characterizes other places in the world, like China, where our University has commitments:
So this summer in Italy, I said to myself:
Should I see this as a problem of cultures clashing with one another that I and we and the world should decry? Or is there something about this phenomenon that I and we can help others to understand and, ultimately, to accept? More specifically, is there something in the Marianist experience of UD that might position our institution uniquely to address the new realities of a changing world?

I think the answer is yes and not surprisingly it is found in the biography of Father Chaminade:
Working with Marie Therese, Adele, and lay sodalities, Chaminade confronted head on the matter of culture in transition during and after the French Revolution. Chaminade’s famous exhortation 1824 that “the levers that move the world somehow need a new fulcrum” spoke directly to this question of cultures in flux and it continues to define the servant-leadership of the Marianists in the contemporary moment.

But while Chaminade’s biography explains why the Marianists would be involved in discrete, national cultures in transition, it does not explain why Marianists would be involved in cross-cultural change. However much we may attribute what we do here at UD to Father Chaminade, Father Chaminade doesn’t always take us where we need to go when talking about things international. Except for a period of exile in Spain, Chaminade’s story is a French story. And
though it is obvious, it bears underscoring: Chaminade did not start the University of Dayton. This University, or rather its predecessor Nazareth, was founded by Father Leo Meyer:

What I find important, though rarely emphasized in our literature and lore, is that Father Meyer and his associates came to Dayton from a very particular part of Europe, the Alsace region,
where the Marianists were particularly strong in the early years:

Depending on your time in history, particularly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Alsace is located in eastern France or in western Germany:
It was a part of Europe that had been and would long remain a transitional space of cultures in contact, convergence, and conflict between France and Germany and, during the Great War, the rest of the world. It is often observed as quaint that our early Marianists here at UD spoke both French and German. Rarely do we extend that linguistic observation to a reflection on its geopolitical implications. Language carries culture and cultural understanding. Father Meyer and those Marianists who followed him brought with them a deep understanding of both the inseparability and the intractability of the local and the global by virtue of their mixed Alsatian heritage.

It was not only as Alsatians that the early UD Marianists embodied a cross-cultural identity. As missionaries, Father Meyer and his associates were purposefully engaged with the “Other” in evangelizing for the church. Furthermore, they conducted their missionary work in an international way that simply came naturally to who they were. I’ve mentioned that they were bilingual. Additionally, what they taught was variously international. Witness the language, history, and geographic instruction of the earliest curriculum:
Our early UD Marianists received directives from Europe, traveled back to Europe for education, and new recruits came to them from a Europe and a part of Europe that was itself in transition through much of the first 75 years of UD’s history. One recruit even arrived here fresh out of the Prussian army. Of course, from the Franco-Prussian war through World War I the world paid a lot of attention to this region:
Nonetheless, I do not think it unrelated to Marianist roots and worldview that in 1914, when a time capsule was inserted into the Administration Building at Mt. St. John, the brothers included a news story about the conflict that was then tearing up the often conflicted home land of many of their predecessors:
So our UD Marianists came from a cross-cultural context, and they continued to put themselves into those contexts. They extended outward to establish missions, and universities, in Hispanic San Antonio and Pacific Hawaii. All of this cross-cultural activity laid the foundation for the expansion of the Marianists around the world, as this map shows:
This expansion made possible the striking internationalism of the Marianists that was
abundantly evident at Father Chaminade’s beautification in 2000:

These many people from many places, all connecting their localism with the larger global reality, were there in Rome to celebrate Father Chaminade; but we shouldn’t forget that they were there as Marianists because of the Alsatian missionary Father Leo Meyer who came across an ocean, brought what he inherently knew about cross cultural realities in Alsace, and established Nazareth in Dayton. In doing so he set in motion the kind of local and global understanding that characterizes the Marianists to this day.

So what, then, does all of this have to do with international education at UD and in the College. My answer would be everything. In a world in which the local and global are increasingly and sometimes problematically in convergence, we have a unique history in our founding by Father Meyer that speaks to the negotiation of differences from the heart of who we are and what we do. As I’ve noted, I began thinking about this in Florence. I’ve also indicated that up until last summer, I really didn’t trouble myself in trying to think through the relationship of the local and global in my work. Dayton was one place; the world was someplace else. But I doubt that I would ever have gotten involved with an engineering program in Florence focused on the local impact of global problems, and I don’t think that I would be doing research on the inherently international in Florentine art had I not been influenced by a Marianist, or rather an Alsatian Marianist University of Dayton. Moreover, since coming back from Florence last summer, I have found myself more and more teaching works of art in which the dynamic between the local
and global is there calling for attention: I’ve taught the infusion of Greco-Roman style in this image of Buddha:

I’ve directed students to observe Japanese influence on French Impressionism:
and I’ve commented on the African dimension of this Madonna by an artist born in England of Nigerian descent:
I’ve even given classes on this little-known, nineteenth-century masterpiece in Boll Theatre:
It depicts a Scandinavian myth, in Neo-Classical style, carved in Rome by an artist of German descent from Cincinnati. In a word, I think I have become Marianist.

Becoming Marianist is something that has come to me over time. But it has happened increasingly this year as I have contemplated how the Marianists, beginning with Father Meyer, have quietly engaged with the local and global. Their example has shown me a path toward understanding what I was observing in Florence and what I have begun thinking about in my own research and teaching here and abroad. This has been good and interesting for me, but I know that my more important work is in aiding our students to see themselves, if not now and here, then later and elsewhere as Marianists. I think that one way that I and we do this is through
educating them in the Marianist example of negotiating the local and global. But we need to engage the local and global interchangeably, to mingle these two in dialogue and debate with the same kind of Marianist curiosity and intellectual intensity that Father Heft brings to the juxtaposition of faith and reason. Traditionally higher education has promoted the international as valuable in aiding students to become better citizens of the world. At UD, I think our heritage in the Alsatian Father Meyer calls us to place one foot around here, in Dayton, and one in some other place and to think about where that stride takes us and our students in cross-cultural understanding.

Many of you are already pointing the way. I see this when Sean Wilkinson makes a picture of a demolished third street bridge that reminds one of a ruined Mesopotamian civilization:
I understand this when Michael Sandy talks about stones in Woodland Cemetery and their origins across the globe:

I experience this when Herbert Martin takes his Paul Laurence Dunbar to Alexandria, Egypt:
and I’ve recently been sensitized to this in the plight of children afflicted anywhere with AIDS through the work of Kristen Cheney on these children in Africa:

What is additionally wonderful is that you are not only pointing from the local to the global; you are also doing this pointing in reverse. So, again, Sean Wilkinson develops a Visual Journal course for delivery first in London and then adapts that same course for an exploration of Dayton, Ohio. This kind simultaneous here and there must certainly be present when Aparna Higgens teaches math, Akhila Ramnarayan holds forth on post-colonial literature, and Judith Huacuja teaches about art and the borders between Mexico and the United States. Often I wonder whether a connected University of Dayton, both here and there, and there and here is something others see in us more readily than we sometimes see in ourselves. A cartoon by Mike Peters:
I realize that my enthusiasm for a seamlessly here and there, there and here institutional posture promises lesser not greater clarity. It no longer fits under the banner of international education, but neither does it march beneath the standard of local education. It strides forth more interestingly in the undefined middle territory between the two. Perhaps, down the line, this will signify what we really mean by educating the whole individual in the Marianist tradition. That would be the whole individual who knows that Dayton is a place, as Una told us, but simultaneously is sensitive and sagacious about places elsewhere.

To conclude: My motivation in this lecture was to explore whether there might be something distinctive that our University might offer in the field of international education, or whatever we may end up calling it. After all, we are in a higher education climate in which just about every institution claims that it is doing the international thing. Here, among many, is Tennessee’s promotion:
WHEN YOU BRING EVENTS OF THE PAST
TO BEAR ON THE FUTURE...THEN YOU’RE
READY FOR THE WORLD

Over the past three years, seven UT faculty members have received National Endowment for the Humanities grants for their work, making the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, one of only nine universities so honored.

UT Knoxville also is home to one of this year’s “Genius Award” recipients: Jay Rubenstein, an associate professor in the department of history, is a 2007 MacArthur Fellow for his work examining 12th-century texts and analyzing effects on Europe’s subsequent culture.

or here, the University of South Florida:
Global Reach.  

Purdue:

or here Purdue:
For many schools I think it is just bandwagonism. In some places, the tunes played from the bandwagon are a bit more risqué:
More modest, of course, is our own promotion, but you’ll note the consistency of the mammalian theme even at this Marianist University:
A subject for another paper.

Seriously, I do not think our commitment is bandwagonism or, rather—if it is—there is no reason for it to be bandwagonism. We have something authentically Marianist to underpin and inspire our international and local commitments and a particular way of approaching and relating them. More seriously still, I think that there might be some urgency for us in thinking along these lines. I’m concerned that our culture’s embrace of the idea of a global world is gradually going about the business of leveling the differences in our world. Sometimes I think we are making our world all too present, all too similar, all too seamlessly local and global at the same time. We have seen this in the surprising popularity of Thomas Friedman’s *The World is Flat* and even locally in misty advertisements from the likes of the Arhaus furniture store:
As a Catholic and Marianist University, as a place committed to the sacramentality and distinctiveness of creation all around us, we should resist this leveling precisely by studying the local and global deeply for its nuances of difference and not superficially with resignation to this falsely attractive though deflating flatness.

Central to our study should be the kind of critical engagement with place, both here and elsewhere, that is truly Marianist. In this, however, I remember a cautionary Paul Morman who often reminded us that we should be careful not to construct the Marianists as merely passive individuals of big hugs and gentle ways. Yes, Father Chaminade was the accommodationist who equated himself to a gentle brook that moves around obstacles. This is an attractive idea that is etched in stone here at “Serenity Pines” but a decanal glance from the very center of our College of Arts and Sciences:
But Chaminade was also a tough man of critical discernment, unafraid to oppose what he saw as wrong in his immediate context and even, on occasion, to admit in frustration that he felt a bit like a stranger in his native land. If anything, it was this critical posture, this sense of being slightly estranged, that also characterized the irascible Father Leo Meyer, the somewhat marginalized founder of this place, who inspires me to think that there may be traction in thinking about the local and global in serious, critical, even discordant terms. In my title, I referenced the idea of the art historian in “strange country,” quoting loosely you may know from a famous moment of doubt and uncertainty about the contemporary moment that Father Chaminade once expressed. This I did as a reminder to myself, and as an invitation to you, that being a stranger is not necessarily bad but can be the first condition for dispassionate intellectual and Marianist discernment of nuance in the connections and differences between places near and
far. I think this is why Father Meyer called this place Nazareth:

Yes, it was at Nazareth that Mary said yes:
But it was also at Nazareth where Mary was deeply troubled and where there she wondered and asked a question of the angelic messenger.

Mary’s act of wondering, questioning can only take us so far in returning to our own Nazareth. Similarly, we cannot ride along forever on the clerical coat tails of Chaminade’s critical discernment or Meyer’s Alsatian cross-culturalism. We must have a living tradition and the same level of courage that led Father Meyer to embrace and sanctify but also to resist this place by calling it Nazareth. Earlier I showed you this image of Nazareth:

![Image of Nazareth map](image)

What I didn’t tell you was that this very local map was drawn by Bro. John Kim:
Bro. Kim was a favorite of Leo Meyer. He accompanied Father Meyer in Meyer’s return to Europe. There Meyer died, and there Bro. Kim remained for 18 years before returning to America and becoming the Inspector of Marianist Schools from 1886 to 1905. Significantly, it was Kim, the important Marianist official, who organized the Marianist contribution to the Catholic educational exhibit at the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893. However modest, unassuming, agrarian, and local this little map may seem today, what informed it, like the very name of Nazareth, was a Marianist experience and purpose that was local and worldly, but also separate, critical, and visionary. When we look at our campus today, or better yet, when we envision its future we should ask what underlying assumptions about Dayton, the world, and
their relationships it embodies and implies:

Ideally, we still see Nazareth in a University that has a distinct Marianist perspective, handed down from Father Meyer’s Alsatian roots, on what it really means to question and to be a bit of a stranger even as we live locally and think globally.