



Starting Again

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The start of a new school year is marked by rituals at all levels of education from pre-school to graduate school. Whether it is new

books, folders, jeans or iPads, first day photos, or Masses of the Holy Spirit, we mark a new beginning and feel a fresh energy for taking up the work to which we have been called. That energy and call translate into a sharpened sense of purpose as we begin again and renew the rich web of relationships that make teaching and learning possible, especially theological teaching and learning. We feel it as a faculty and staff.

Our graduates report the same about the schools where they teach and the parishes where they serve. While no organization comes to a standstill for the summer (certainly not ours!), there is still a re-starting in the fall that holds real promise. As a teacher, I remember all I have learned from my students and am re-invigorated to do all I can to guide them deeper into subject matter I love. Students feel the excitement of engaging new courses, new teachers, authors and classmates, as well as engaging the familiar anew as they seek to deepen their understanding of

God and God's ways in the world, of their own vocation and their skillfulness in guiding others in their discipleship.

We just finished a faculty workshop in which we discussed how we can work together to pay attention to the effects of our teaching on student learning. Starting again is an original moment even if it involves repeating what we take for granted (teaching and learning). Its originality lies in its opportunity to recommit ourselves to mission – the mission we share with others and the mission that guides each of our lives. Experience tells us that the excitement of these first days and weeks will turn into routine, that by Thanksgiving we will recall the calluses of “ordinary time.” But routine and its rituals can also create a space for wonder and the wondrous that breaks through the callus of the ordinary. We may feel that a bit more keenly in the anticipation and hope of these times of starting again, a renewal and reminder we celebrate, but it becomes reality in the “ordinary,” daily work of the months to come.

What we are about as a school, what each of you are about wherever and however you are living out your vocation, is far from ordinary. May the hope and energy of this new beginning be present with you throughout the months ahead.