

Building Field Hospitals:
Discerning New Directions to Learning For Tomorrow's Jesuit Schools

The primary purpose of theological education has been to shape and mold within young people the contours of faith, a life-long process that can forge important pathways toward meaning and hope - especially during life's most challenging moments. However, in today's complex world, it can oftentimes be difficult for young people to find meaning and hope, particularly in organized religion and through the study of theology. Traditional approaches to learning have historically struggled to provide an adequate response to the contemporary needs and interests of its students. Offering students authentic encounters of faith through the lens of their own context has the real potential to deepen their reflection on and experience of themselves, their peers, their world, and ultimately of Jesus Christ - in and through the process of theological education.

During the Fall semester my sophomore Biblical Studies students at Jesuit High School in Portland, Oregon read Old Testament accounts of Israel's oppression in Egypt, God's liberative justice, and the Israelites' forty years of wandering in the Sinai Desert as refugees in search of a land they could call their own. To gain a greater sense of the Israelites' experience centuries ago, my class examined current experiences of migrants and refugees in Burkina Faso, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and those at the border between Poland and Belarus. They then situated themselves at the frontlines of one of these contemporary crises by developing comprehensive proposals for sustainable emergency refugee camps, which would be presented to a Regional Director of Jesuit Refugee Services or the United Nations Refugee Agency. The project's prompt - along with a competency-based rubric and resources for supporting students' collaboration, research, reflection and revision - can be accessed [here](#).

These examples of [project products](#) demonstrate student teams' plans for the care and development of migrants and refugees, as well as focused collaboration, critical thinking, communication, and creativity sustained over several weeks. After teams produced their video proposals, Josh Utter, Outreach Officer for JRS in Washington D.C., graciously reviewed their work and offered his [feedback](#), which provided valuable insights for students in the revision phase of the project process. Finally, I invited my students to reflect on their experience of problem-solving within a global context and to understand how it corresponds to their reading of the Old Testament.

My students' projects and [reflections](#) communicate to me that project-based learning responds to the challenge that emerged from II Colloquium JESEDU - 2021 this past summer: to "educate for depth and global citizenship in faith and in reconciliation." Through this new approach to learning, I see my students developing 21st century competencies within the discipline of theology as they look at the world through the lens of Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching, form their character in and through collaborating with peers, develop creative solutions to real world problems, grow in empathy, deepen their awareness of their place and responsibility in an increasingly interconnected world, and develop a personal faith that seeks justice, solidarity, and interculturality.

As an Ignatian teacher of theology devoted to journeying with young adults further into the 21st Century, I have come to believe in the importance of affording my students opportunities to learn *how* to live out their faith. Whether my students realize it or not, they attend a school like Jesuit to become healers in partnership with God, builders of field hospitals at the frontlines of the 21st Century's great battles. With a carefully implemented student-centered approach, our students can get closer to the real world outside the classroom, allowing them to see how their faith invites them to live a meaningful life of co-creation toward a hope-filled future.