



Profile in  Leadership

As professor of fine arts and director of the Studio Art Program, **Rev. Michael F. Tunney, S.J.**, cultivates the Jesuit ideals through creative pursuits.

Saint Ignatius Loyola believed God could be revealed through creative pursuits, including theater, music and fine art. For **Rev. Michael F. Tunney, S.J.**, his appreciation of the creative arts began as a young boy when model airplanes, paint-by-number sets and visits to the Albright-Knox Art Gallery unleashed his talents.

But the union between Father Tunney's two callings became apparent while he was a student at Canisius High School. He took art classes, became a member of the school's art club, and created many original drawings and paintings. It was also at Canisius where the Jesuits first influenced Father Tunney with what he calls "a wonderful combination of holy and human."

More than 30 years later, Father Tunney is an acclaimed artist, a professor of fine arts, and director of the Studio Art Program, which he developed at Canisius College in 2003. He is also a member of the Society of Jesus.

"Art was always a part of my Jesuit life," says Father Tunney, who entered the Society of Jesus in 1976. "Ignatius and Jesuits ever since have looked for every way possible to bring God to people in their day-to-day lives, including through art and culture. Nothing in our world is apart from God's touch and grace."

As a professor and a Jesuit, Father Tunney imparts those same ideals onto students. He cultivates their skills and imaginations, encourages them to show their finished works and brings spiritual direction to their lives.

"When you develop an individual's talent and draw out the contributions that one person can give back to others, it elevates and educates not just the individual but his or her audience as well," says Father Tunney. "There is something sacred in that action."

"The atmosphere in Father Tunney's classroom is very positive and fluid," says Fine Arts Department Chair **Martha Dunkelmann, PhD.** "He begins each class with an inclusive

"Father Tunney epitomizes the Jesuit mission through his diverse on-campus roles and in his daily life," says Canisius College President Rev. Vincent M. Cooke, S.J. "He is an exemplary leader for the Jesuit community."

prayer for students of all faiths. He moves around the room and speaks with each student individually. Better than anyone I know, he engages students and gets them to participate."

Outside of class, Father Tunney presides at on-campus Masses and assists with student retreats. His ministry also extends beyond Canisius College. Father Tunney assists with weekday Masses at St. Luke's Mission of Mercy. He served 13 years as weekend liturgist at St. Mary of Sorrow's Church and was present for its closing Mass on September 15.

Father Tunney's newest role is rector of the Jesuit community at Canisius College. He is responsible for *cura personalis*, or personal care, of 27 Jesuits including three who reside at St. Ann's Church in Buffalo. He is also responsible for *cura apostolica*, or guidance of their activities, within the local Jesuit educational institutions.

"Father Tunney epitomizes the Jesuit mission through his diverse on-campus roles and in his daily life," says Canisius College President **Rev. Vincent M. Cooke, S.J.** "He is an exemplary leader for the Jesuit community."

At 49, Father Tunney is the second youngest Jesuit in the community. He jokes that many of the Jesuits are old enough to be his father. Still, "They accept me gracefully as the local superior and offer me respect and support," he says.

"For our community to have a creative, young Jesuit in the role of rector, with new perspectives, can only help the Jesuits maintain

their presence and increase our impact," adds **Rev. Patrick J. Lynch, S.J.**, chair of religious studies and theology, and predecessor to Father Tunney in the role of rector.

Ordained in 1988, Father Tunney earned a bachelor's degree in English and philosophy from Fordham University, a master of fine arts/master of science degree in art history from Pratt Institute, and a master of sacred theology degree and a master of divinity degree from the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley. He has exhibited locally at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Art Dialogue Gallery and the former Bryant Street Art Gallery, as well as in studios throughout the U.S. and in Canada.

Father Tunney believes *A Legacy of Leadership: The Campaign for Canisius College* is a sign of growth and progress and a blessing for Canisius, a college whose legacy of making leaders reaches back to St. Ignatius' own student days. And he prays that the Jesuit mission will prosper at Canisius for many years to come.

"Colleges and universities remain great places for Jesuits to live and labor," says Father Tunney. "In the classrooms with students, we all grow in wisdom and grace. In offices with colleagues, our decisions shape many lives in an ever-changing world. In meetings, our voices support, guide and challenge. In the Quad, stories and laughter make us more human and holy. And in the chapel, gathered around the scripture and Eucharist, the body of Christ never tires of teaching, healing and walking with us." 🙏

