



Matthew Ippel, SJ, (second from left) with students from Cristo Rey Jesuit High School – Twin Cities

# Invitations to Encounter

By Matthew Ippel, SJ

**A** young Central American migrant living far from his family struggles to compose himself during the holiday party.

A Salvadoran immigrant shares how he clung to la Virgen de Guadalupe as a sign of hope during a dangerous, tiring journey from Central America through Mexico.

A student at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School – Twin Cities says I have a soothing voice...that puts her to sleep in class!

Life is full of encounters. My time as a Jesuit has blessed and challenged me with many. They have been dis-comforting, eye-opening, and grace-filled, turning my world upside down.

On a recent trip to Saint Louis University, Steve, another Jesuit scholastic, and I discussed our philosophy studies. Steve spoke about Emmanuel Levinas, a philosopher who says the role of the other and her/his impact on another person is their “face” making a claim on us. As I look back

on the encounters I have experienced as a Jesuit, I am struck by how each person made a claim on me.

I feel compassion for the young man spending Christmas away from his family for the first time. I am disturbed at the thought of someone

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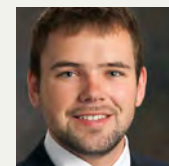
fleeing horrific violence and oppression. I am heartened by my student’s honesty and support for my efforts to improve.

As I grow into my Jesuit vocation, I realize the primacy of human experience and God’s role in all of it. God invites, challenges, and encourages me to recognize and love the “face” making a claim on me. This claim is about encountering others in a world that constantly changes in ways both humanizing and dehumanizing.

Recognizing God’s presence in our

world is important. So is responding. That is the claim. It reveals another’s authority on me, leading me to ask: Why did this happen? What do I do now?

These are questions I struggle with, questions that draw me deeper into the mystery of this Jesuit vocation to which I have responded, “Yes.” My vocation brings me to our world’s raw humanity, where I see the invitation to receive and respond to all the human encounters God gives me. I offer all I have and am, knowing that God will guide and challenge me to be of greater service with more selfless, abounding love. ✠



**Matthew Ippel, SJ**, is a Jesuit scholastic of the Chicago-Detroit Province. He graduated from the University of Detroit Jesuit High School and Academy and Georgetown University. Currently studying philosophy at Loyola University Chicago, he will move to Lima, Peru, this summer to continue his studies at Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya.