

Cheyenne Boon:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Cheyenne Boon:

Welcome to morning prayers. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton psalter book. Psalm number 54, found on page 27. Please remain masked, and rise in body or spirit, to read responsively by whole verse.

Cheyenne Boon:

Save me, O God, by your name, and vindicate me by your might.

Congregation:

Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.

Cheyenne Boon:

For the insolent have risen against me, the ruthless seek my life; they do not set God before them.

Congregation:

But surely, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.

Cheyenne Boon:

He will repay my enemies for their evil. In your faithfulness, put an end to them.

Congregation:

With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good.

Cheyenne Boon:

For he has delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.

Choir:

(singing)

John Camardella:

Good morning, everyone.

Congregation:

Good morning.

John Camardella:

A poem, from Wendell Berry.

No, no, there is no going back. Less and less you are that possibility you were. More and more you have become those lives and deaths that have belonged to you. You have become a sort of grave containing much that was and is no more, beloved then, now, and always. Now more than ever, you can be generous toward each day that comes, young, to disappear forever, and yet remain unaging in the mind. Every day you have less reason not to give yourself away.

In January, of 2018, I received a phone call from the director of player development from the Toronto Blue Jays, a major league baseball team. I was stunned. I was asked to travel to Tampa, and present to their front office and coaching staff, on how applying our method for studying religion and culture might improve relationships in their organizations. I know nothing about baseball. You see, one of my former high school students was now an infielder for the team. And after overhearing the conversation in the training room, respectfully told a team exec to call me.

Throughout the weekend, at spring training, I met Protestant Christians from Texas, a reformed Jew from California, players from Korea and Japan, who were raised in Shinto and Buddhist traditions, and devout Roman Catholics from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

What my former student understood, and then a major league baseball team was beginning to understand, was that each of us have the capacity to educate ourselves, and deepen our commitment to one another, in this vibrant and diverse world, we all inhabit.

My name's John Camardella. It's an honor to be with you this morning, to speak about my teaching career in public schools. I'm currently on sabbatical, and finishing up a master's in religion and public life at the Divinity School, where my final project aims at shifting the way administrators and educators address religion in classrooms and in curriculum.

I've been fascinated with religion my entire life. Before I was born, my parents were both members of Catholic monastic communities. Dad was a Xaverian brother from Brooklyn, mom, a Dominican nun from Detroit. Both dedicated their lives to serving God. But after are meeting in the '70s, in a post Vatican II world, they left their orders, married, and I showed up shortly after. For some light Friday humor, just imagine growing up as the only son of a nun, with the initials of JC. The nickname still follows me.

When I was young, we lived in a condominium complex, just Northwest of Chicago. Money was always tight, but our dining room was always full. The Wans, a Korean Buddhist family, lived next door and Rose Feur, a Jewish widow, lived above us. For years, both joined us for dinners and on holidays. And even after mom accepted a new job, and we moved a few miles away, Rose and the Wans kept coming. However, now, our dining room table was expanding, because mom kept inviting seminarians, from the local seminary in Mundelein. And I got a new education, from young men from the Philippines, from Mexico, and from Uganda. These gatherings left an indelible mark. And as I graduated high school, I realized that no matter what, my parents were always giving themselves away, and making sure there was always room for another seat at the table.

After finishing college, and beginning my teaching career, I soon realized that, nowhere in our high school was there a class for students to engage with religion and culture, in the way I had experienced growing up, and I worked to find a solution. It took a few years to get our world religion elective course off the ground, but thanks to the support from my school district, and Dr. Diane Moore, and her RPL staff here at Harvard, and especially, my good friend and colleague, Sarabinh Levy-Brightman, I will begin my 14th year of offering this course, this upcoming fall.

Think for a minute, of what we expect from young people. Obviously, we want everybody to be able to read and write, but we also want them literate in the worlds of health, personal finance, nutrition, technology. You get the idea. I'll state plainly, that a lack of literacy in religious and cultural affairs, has real world consequences. Including, a hindered ability to evaluate religious claims, a simplistic and shallow view of world events, and even a weakened capacity to critique the claims of those preaching religious intolerance and hate.

In closing, I believe that establishing and maintaining inclusive environments, and learning more about others, is worth our time. Especially, those who might not adhere to our specific religious commitments, or cultural norms. Others will be grateful, and we will be better for it. Because no matter how cramped our dining room tables might feel, there's always room for another seat. And as Wendell Berry reminds us, every day, we have less reason not to give ourselves away.

John Camardella:

Thank you, and have a wonderful weekend.

Cheyenne Boon:

Our prayer this morning, comes from the Corrymeela community in Northern Ireland. If you would all please rise, in body or spirit, and let us pray.

Cheyenne Boon:

God of all humanity, in times of violence, we see how inhuman we can be. We pray for those, who today, are weighed down by grief. We pray for those, who yesterday, were weighed down by grief, and the day before, and all the days before the day before. We pray too, for those who help us turn towards justice and peace. Turn us all towards justice and peace, because we need it. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

And together, let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught us saying,

Congregation:

Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

Let us sing, O for a Closer Walk with God, number 292, in your crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation:

(singing)

Cheyenne Boon:

As we go into this day, let us bless and keep one another. Let us make peace. Let us be at peace. May it be so, and make the church say, amen.

Congregation:

Amen.