

# Saint Sabina Welcomes the Cultural Diversity Seminar Students of Notre Dame

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TEN students in a Cultural Diversity Seminar, sponsored by the Center for Social Concerns of the University of Notre Dame, spent their fall break in Hyde Park, the well-known home of the University of Chicago, many museums and theological seminaries, and presidential candidate Barack Obama. With one of its stated goals to “increase awareness of the variety of approaches and strategies employed by ethnic organizations, churches and others to improve social conditions,” the course seeks to immerse students in a variety of Chicago subcultures.

The week opened with Mass

at St. Sabina’s Catholic Parish, or “faith community” as its parishioners prefer to call it. St. Sabina’s has gained a national reputation for its unique restructuring of the Mass and for its pastor, Father Michael Pflieger. Pflieger has gained his own recognition for supporting Senator Barack Obama’s presidential candidacy, for welcoming the infamous Reverend Jeremiah Wright to speak at the parish, and for refusing to accept Cardinal George’s reassignment to a new parish. Although the students were able to take part in Father Pflieger’s celebration of the Mass and hear his sermon, his early departure prior to the conclusion of the Mass prevented them from speaking to him afterwards.

The activities of the week were

all determined by the Chicago Center for Urban Life, through which group Notre Dame was sponsoring the seminar. The students had the opportunity to visit the Kozminski Elementary Community Academy in the community of Bronzeville, where many of the students come from low-income households. They ate exotic meals from authentic Persian, Mexican, Mediterranean, and Indian restaurants. They enjoyed soul food from B.J.’s Market, toured the Board of Trade, and went on the Ghetto Bus Tour directed by public-housing activist, Beauty Turner.

One night they had dinner at a gay bar called Hamburger Mary’s and attended a showing of “The Ville,” a weekly episodic performance that includes graphic

scenes of homosexual activity. On the calendar of events on the restaurant’s website, performances such as “Gays Got Talent” are listed, and for the election night activities, the description includes the hope to “put a nail in the coffin of this Republican administration. Can you say Obama-tinis [sic]”?!

The Chicago Center, beyond organizing all such excursions, brought in speakers to address the students on the final morning. Activist Prexy Nesbit, a member of the Chicago Center’s 35th Anniversary Honorary Committee, delivered a political commentary against capitalism and offered his support for Barack Obama. Other members of the Committee, such as Father Michael Pflieger, Andy Thaler of the Gay Libera-

tion Network, and Dick Durbin, Illinois Democratic Senator were absent.

Under the direction of leader Iris Outlaw, the director of Multicultural Student Programs and Services at Notre Dame, the Cultural Diversity Seminar seeks to select a small group of students from a pool of applicants to partake in the cultural richness of the major urban center of Chicago, Illinois. Outlaw led the three class sessions in which students enrolled prior to the immersion experience, and she provided their orientation, although she was not present for the fall break seminar. Multicultural Student Programs and Services is a division of the Office of Student Affairs.

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