

Author Gregory Boyle Gives Schaff Lecture

December 10, 2018

Gregory Boyle, author of the *New York Times* best-seller *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*, delivered the Schaff Lecture on Ethics and Morals at Mercersburg Academy December 10 in the Irvine Memorial Chapel. The lecture served as one of three events in Mercersburg's 2018-2019 Monday Evening Lecture Series.

Tattoos on the Heart was a 2018 summer reading selection at Mercersburg.

Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, Calif., has dedicated his life to helping that city's most marginalized individuals find a place in society's ranks. Boyle is a Los Angeles native and Jesuit priest. He was transformed by his work in Bolivia and Mexico and at California's Folsom Prison with those who "live at the margins." His dedication to finding a place for all in our society brought him to the Boyle Heights community of East Los Angeles, where he served as pastor of Dolores Mission Church (then the poorest parish in the city), from 1986 through 1992.

In 1988, he and parish and community members started what became Homeboy Industries, which is the largest gang intervention, rehab, and re-entry program in the world. As a nonprofit organization, Homeboy employs and trains hundreds of former gang members every year in a range of social enterprises, including Homeboy Silkscreen & Embroidery, Homeboy Bakery, Homeboy/Homegirl Merchandise, Homegirl Café, and Homeboy Electronics Recycling. Now located in downtown Los Angeles, Homeboy provides a path to change and free critical services, such as tattoo removal (more than 36,000 treatments per year), GED programs, and skills classes to thousands of people who walk through its doors each year seeking a better life.

Boyle's talk "The Whole Language: The Power of Extravagant Tenderness" shared what he has learned in three decades of running Homeboy Industries; specifically, that love is the answer, community is the context, and tenderness is the connective tissue. Tenderness reflects the foundational notion that there is no "us and them," only "us." Homeboy Industries seeks to be what the world is invited to become and kinship cannot happen without tenderness.

Boyle met with students and faculty for dinner before the lecture. He spoke at a faculty meeting December 11 and hosted a Q&A with students before meeting with a group of faculty to learn from and discuss his experiences of working with adolescents.

The Schaff Family Endowment was funded by and is in honor of Schaff brothers Phillip H. '38, Charles B. '41, and David S. '42. The endowment supports annual speakers "on topics related to fundamental human values—those principles which direct a person's decisions and actions because they clarify what is 'right' and 'wrong.'" Recent Schaff Lecturers have

included investigative sports journalist Jeremy Schaap and author and musician James McBride.

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