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I spent this past summer at the Center of Concern, a think-tank type research organization located in northeast Washington, DC near the campus of the Catholic University of America. My specific assignment was to contribute as an intern with the Education for Justice (EFJ) branch of the organization, whose chief focus is public outreach and education on Catholic Social Teaching (CST), and the issues with which it is concerned. Education for Justice has its own website, and it charges a modest fee for access to all kinds of educational resources on CST and how it bears on contemporary issues; EFJ additionally provides prayers and guides for spiritual reflection to its clients. My work as an intern for EFJ was primarily to swim in the sea of the website's thousands of articles and make revisions and new contributions to it.

It might be useful for me to first make a few comments about how I was led to apply for the Center of Concern and what I was expecting to receive from the experience. As a theology major also working on a minor in peace studies, I was anticipating first and foremost an intellectual experience within a kind of communal-office setting. Although many of the internships offered by bodies such as the CSC and the Kellogg Institute at Notre Dame involve traveling to exotic places and are designed to produce a feeling of culture shock, I did not expect the Center of Concern to be that way, and true to my expectations, it was not. Instead, I got the cerebral, yet exciting and enriching experience that I had hoped for.

Even before I first arrived at the Center of Concern, my supervisor Sr. Katherine Feely and I had been in touch and discussed my interests, the organization's needs, and seminal ideas for projects that I might work on. When I told her that my first and primary love was theology and that I was presently studying in Rome for the semester, she immediately piped up that I

should work on Pope Benedict XVI's upcoming encyclical, which was slated for release early in the summer. For me, this was a tremendously exciting opportunity, since such significant and meaningful moments in the development of Catholic social doctrine do not come along often. Naturally, social encyclicals lie at the heart of EFJ's project to educate its clientele about the Church's teaching in the realm of societal issues. Even before the internship began, I was excited about receiving my assignment.

When I got there, I was not disappointed, even though I arrived on June 1 and the encyclical *Caritas in veritate* was not released until the first week of July. I had plenty of preparatory work to do: perusing the EFJ website for articles which were directly concerned with globalization and other topics that the Pope would be sure to cover in the encyclical, and summarizing Benedict's and John Paul II's developments of CST on the concepts of solidarity, globalization, and a host of others. Essentially my job for the first month was to familiarize myself with the particular aspects of CST that were sure to be the subject matter of the upcoming encyclical, and to keep the website up to date in anticipation of the encyclical.

During this time I of course had other assignments to work on as well. I joined Sr. Katherine in Baltimore to meet with a Catholic Relief Services employee and collaborate on generating retreat schedules and materials for teens going on faith-based service trips. I wrote up a few guides for spiritual reflection and profiled an Irish Jesuit priest in Camden, New Jersey who is doing tremendous work for the poor in his area. Sr. Katherine also sent me out to various conferences and meetings to get a better feeling for the context in which the Center of Concern does its work.

The most exciting part of the summer, however, was the second month, after *Caritas in veritate* was released. It was an important time for the entire Center of Concern, and observing

the reactions and efforts to absorb the extensive text's principles and directives was fascinating. I sat in on several staff meetings and was even allowed to offer my own input and interpretations of the encyclical. Sr. Katherine and I spent long hours giving the encyclical multiple readings, all with an eye on creating a packet of materials to be sent out to EFJ subscribers and others who were willing to pay for it. We had to work briskly, but carefully; quickly but thoroughly. I have to admit that it was extremely exciting to be part of this process, and the fact that customers would be paying to read what I had written motivated me to be as refined and precise as possible. Sr. Katherine and I met dozens of times to bounce thoughts off of each other, diagram concept charts and go over drafts of what I had written. When all the dust was settled, I had produced four or five documents on topics ranging from the economic common good to Catholic interpretations of globalization. Even though the output seems relatively small compared to the number of hours put into the work, this was because our thought process was so thorough and our ultimate concern was quality rather than quantity or speed of response. A document as dense and important as *Caritas in veritate* deserves such a treatment. It was clear that much of the commentary which sprouted up immediately upon the encyclical's release was shallow and knee-jerk; our goal was to go beyond such commentary and provide truly insightful and substantial material regarding the encyclical.

All in all, the work was very rewarding, especially because I felt that my skills were taken by Sr. Katherine and directed towards a purpose that was useful to the organization. She made it a point early on to try and understand my personal interests and talents, and she adjusted the assignments she gave me accordingly. Helpful also was the fact that she let me work at my own pace and at my own comfort level, while at the same time challenging me to further clarify my thought and improve my work. She was just terrific. I suppose that it was fortunate that the

summer I worked at the Center of Concern happened to coincide exactly with the release of a new papal encyclical (the first released since 1991); however, I strongly believe that anyone who has a legitimate intellectual passion for matters of peace and justice will be given the opportunity to flourish and succeed at the Center of Concern. The work of the Center of Concern and especially EFJ is so wide-ranging and comprehensive that anyone who is interested in Catholic Social Teaching will benefit from the internship.

Although I felt the internship to be a beneficial and worthwhile experience, there were also a few challenges to working at the Center of Concern. I would say that chief among these is that my interactions with the staff were limited and I often worked alone. When I applied to the Center of Concern, I had hoped to be engaged intellectually within a research community. This definitely did happen but not to the extent that I had anticipated or hoped. The staff at the Center of Concern is hardworking and dedicated, and unfortunately it was rare for their work to coincide with mine or for ideas to be exchanged, generated, questioned and asserted within the context of a vibrant organizational community. This did happen a good deal, especially with several of my intern colleagues, but it would have been nice to experience communal interaction more frequently.

That concern notwithstanding, my time at the Center of Concern was both challenging and rewarding, and I am pleased that I did it. In my opinion, anyone who has a passion for social justice and who is interested in education and educational writing would benefit from this internship tremendously.