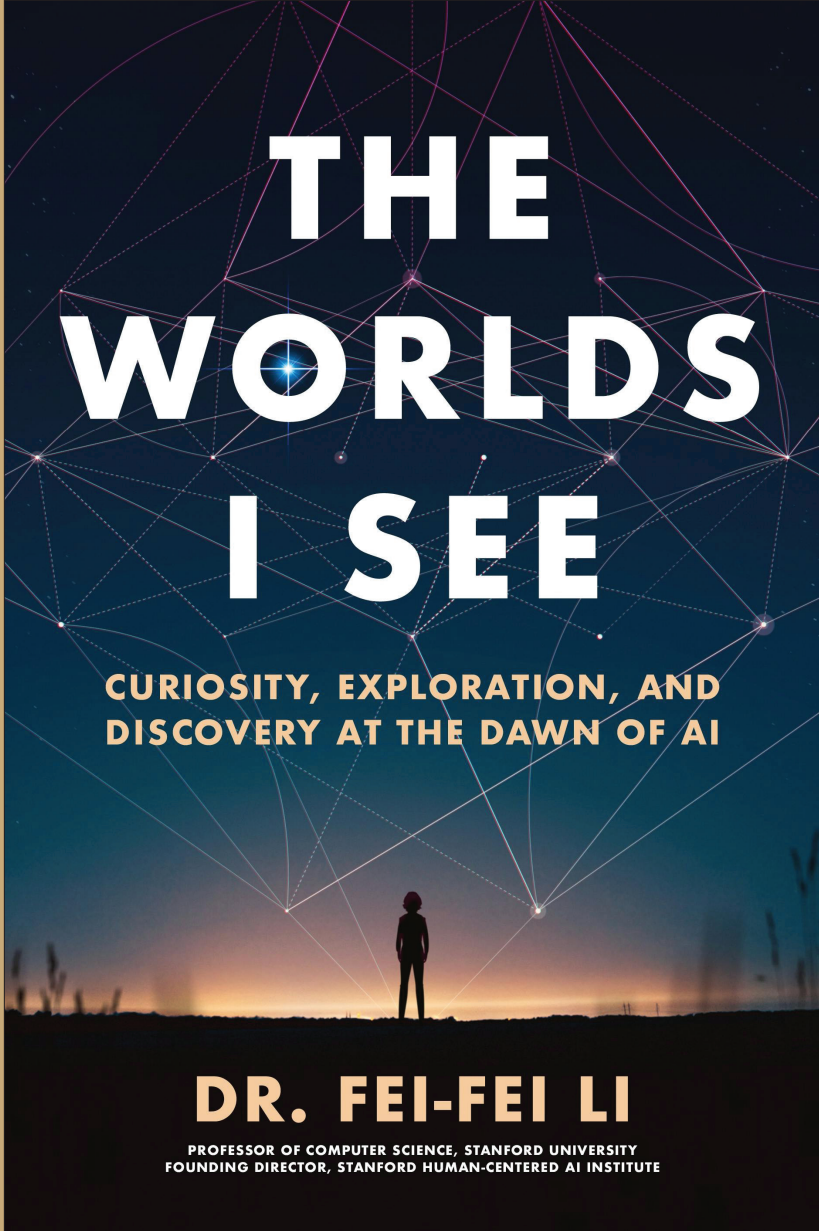


BOSTON COLLEGE



FIRST YEAR ACADEMIC CONVOCATION  
SEPTEMBER 2024



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# CONVERSATIONS AT BOSTON COLLEGE

As a Jesuit, Catholic University, conversation is at the heart of the Boston College experience. From these Conversations in the First Year, to discussions in the classroom, to late-night confidences with roommates and friends, to discourse with on-campus speakers, to mentoring talks with faculty and staff members, to engagement with the Greater Boston community and with the global community through international programs – Boston College encourages students to ask big questions, to reflect, and to respond in the most loving way to the world around you.

*In the daily give and take of their social lives and in more dramatic experiences, young men and women grow into a coherent sense of identity, of comfort with themselves and with the other people in their lives and in the communities of which they are members. They learn to manage emotions, take responsibility for their actions, develop mature interpersonal relationships, work collaboratively, and enlarge—across racial, ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic boundaries— their understanding of who is to be cared for and who is to be included in their community of concern. In a Jesuit university, especially, they are likely to be challenged to experience directly the lives of those marginalized in our social systems, to reflect on social and political structures and how they can inhibit or advance the just flourishing of individuals and communities, and to decide how they can use their own gifts and talents to advance the common good (from *The Journey Into Adulthood*, pp. 13-14).*

As you enter Boston College, you must consider how we live in the 21st century and how the world is growing rapidly and changing in unforeseen ways. In the midst of this globalized and technologically driven world, we ask you to critically evaluate all that has come

before us. To enter into the University core curriculum is to enter into a foundation of knowledge and experiences that will better equip each of you to synthesize and adapt to the ever-changing world that you are part of each day. Being able to read, write, and think critically will be important building blocks within your academic journey here at Boston College.

To fully embrace your Jesuit, Catholic education, you also need to consider how you will grow in your own understanding of faith. There are many conversation partners, including members of the Jesuit community, faculty, staff, and administrators, who are here to be your companions in contemplative action and reflective conversation as you search for truths in your life and the world around you.

*Implicit in this understanding of the relationship of teacher and student is the assumption that education is, fundamentally, a conversation. Suppose we build on this idea. The life of a college or university is in some ways a never-ending conversation—in classrooms, dorm rooms, dining halls, at parties, in faculty offices, scheduled meetings, casual encounters, and work settings. The topics may be an economic theory, the results of an experiment, the Big Questions that have engaged thinkers for ages, last week's statistics quiz, tomorrow night's party, the ups and downs of romantic relationships, political and social issues nationally and across the world, life after graduation, diets, family problems, and any number of other subjects. A student has multiple conversation partners: teachers, certainly, but also roommates, friends, coaches, campus ministers, academic advisors, counselors, work-study supervisors, parents and other family members. And some of the most important conversation partners may be the books they read, the thinkers they study, the works of art they experience, the organized bodies of knowledge they have to master, the cultural and religious and intellectual traditions they encounter, and the interpretive theories that are proposed to them (from *The Journey Into Adulthood*, pp. 17-19).*



## WHY READ *THE WORLDS I SEE*?

“I couldn’t yet understand what motivated my mother’s desire to escape, but the more I read, the more I came to share her love for imagining worlds beyond my own,” (*The Worlds I See*, p. 15).

As a member of the class of 2028, each of you will have the opportunity to read *The Worlds I See* and to welcome its author, Fei-Fei Li, to Boston College to discuss this work.

In this book, Li weaves together her story of her family’s immigration to the United States from China and her journey into a career in the sciences, two worlds which become integrated in her experience.

Early on in the book, she talks about the importance of developing Artificial Intelligence (AI) with a focus on meeting the needs of today’s world while remaining human-centered.

“I wrote that the true impact of AI on the world would be largely determined by the motivation that guided the development of the technology—a disturbing thought in an era of expanding facial recognition and targeted advertising. But if we were to broaden our vision for AI to explicitly include a positive impact on humans and communities- if our definition of success could include such things- I was convinced that AI could change the world for the better. I still am,” (*The Worlds I See*, p. 3).

“Whatever awaited me, I was sure of one thing: this technology had the power to transform the world for the better. How exactly we’d reach that future remained an open question, but it was clear, even then, that conversations like the one about to begin were our best chance at answering it,” (*The Worlds I See*, p. 7).

As you read this book and have the chance to engage in the first of many conversations with classmates and professors, you will be invited to think about how we will reach the future, what role you will have in it, and the worlds you see.



## CONVERSATIONS IN THE FIRST YEAR

“What they had in common, however—to an uncanny degree—was a curiosity that could only be described as gleeful, imbuing everything they said with an infectious energy. They asked probing questions about complex subjects without hesitation or even a hint of self-consciousness, as if the answers to life’s deepest mysteries were never more than a conversation away,” (*The Worlds I See*, p. 111).

Since 2004, *Conversations in the First Year* has engaged members of the incoming class in an intellectual and reflective dialogue with a common text, embodying the richness of the Catholic intellectual tradition at Boston College which calls us to examine our faith and experience in conversation with other thinkers in order to pursue the greater glory of God. This conversation among thoughtful leaders that will begin for you with this common text will carry over to conversations with all members of the Boston College community during your next four years.

*Boston College proposes an explicit and intentional approach to a broader vision of student formation, drawn from the understanding of what it means to be human that is at the heart of the Jesuit educational tradition. In this view, student formation has three interconnected dimensions—an intellectual dimension, a social dimension, and a spiritual dimension—and a student’s growth along all three dimensions ideally moves toward integration. Fostering this integrative movement is the responsibility of all the adults in the university. Their roles give them different points of entry into students’ lives, each of which is an opportunity to engage students in the kind of “expert conversation” that helps them pay attention to their experience, reflect on its meaning, and make good decisions in light of what they have learned. This conversation already happens in many places at Boston College. An*

*explicit and intentional concept of formation will draw all the adults in the university community into a collective effort to build on what we are already doing well in order to facilitate the full human flourishing of all our students (The Journey Into Adulthood, p. 1).*

This ongoing conversation is part of the University's commitment to finding God in all things. "Contemporary Jesuit schools maintain the original commitment to rigorous intellectual development, to personal, moral, and religious formation, and to the discernment of God's action in all aspects of the student's experience. The pursuit of the greater glory of God remains rooted in a worldview that God can be encountered in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly together." (*The Catholic Intellectual Tradition: A Conversation at Boston College*).



## A WAY TO APPROACH THE TEXT

As you enter Boston College, we will ask each of you to engage in conversation, to live together, and to share your life with one another. As members of the Class of 2028, your conversation will include this book which invites you to consider how your curiosity and approach to other informs what animates you and how you engage with the world. It is the University's hope that you will discover conversation partners during your time at Boston College who encourage your curiosity, authenticity, and discernment.

*The early Jesuits struggled to describe what they called "our way of proceeding." Their distinctive spirituality can be seen as a three-part process. It begins with paying attention to experience, moves to reflecting on its meaning, and ends in deciding how to act. Jesuit education, then, can be described in terms of three key movements:*



*being attentive, being reflective, and being loving. It results in the kind of good decision-making that St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, called discernment. Discernment enables each of us to seek the greater good before us. Having this deep interior knowledge of the heart is to communicate with God and trust that the hand of God is at work fortifying and directing us in our lives. One of the many goals of a Jesuit education is to produce men and women for whom discernment is a habit.*

*We can think of discernment as the lifelong process of exploring our experience, reflecting upon its meaning, and living in a way that translates this meaning into action that creates a harmonious community for us all. We can also think of this process as something that we focus on with special intensity at particular moments in our lives, for example, during the four years of college or when we have to make important decisions. When we discern, we want to do so freely and with a sense of what God is calling us to do.*

*Through the practice of discerning, we grow in our ability to imagine how we are going to live our lives and discover our vocations. The novelist and theologian Frederick Buechner describes vocation as “the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” When we arrive at this place of convergence, we understand the fit between who we are and what the world needs of us; St. Ignatius urges us to be unafraid to live with the consequences of this realization and to respond with generosity and magnanimity, because this is the way that we can love as God loves (A Pocket Guide to Jesuit Education).*

From the very beginning, the goal of Jesuit education has been to form men and women for others. To cultivate this formation, St. Ignatius and his companions translated their distinctive spirituality into an educational vision by describing it as a three-part process. It begins with paying attention to experience, moves to reflecting on the meaning of experience, and ends in deciding how to act moving forward. Jesuit education, then, can be described in terms of three key movements: **Be attentive, be reflective, be loving** (A Pocket Guide to Jesuit Education).

As part of their formation, St. Ignatius and his early Jesuit companions were committed to living in the world. At that time most religious orders did not espouse this global view, yet the Society of Jesus believed it was critical to engage people where they were, to be present in the world, to go out to the margins. These same principles of living a life of service, care for the whole person, and accompaniment provide the framework for today's Boston College experience.

“The aspiration at the heart of the Jesuit educational tradition, then, is that every student will be an active and engaged learner, conscious of growing intellectually, socially, and spiritually, and of being able to integrate these dimensions of growth with his or her unique personality, talents, and ambitions. By internalizing the dynamic of paying attention, reflecting, and making good decisions, students lay the foundation for an adulthood where the practice of discernment about their experience and their actions becomes a way of life,” (*The Journey Into Adulthood*, p. 21).



## CURA PERSONALIS, CURIOSITY, AND CONVERSATION

*So, for Jesuit education, it is not enough to live authentically in the world. We have to participate in the transformation of the world (the Hebrew phrase tikkun olam conveys the same idea, of mending or repairing the world). For more than four hundred years, it has been said that Jesuit education educated “the whole person.” Today, we live with an increasingly global sense of what it means to be human. A person can’t be considered “whole” without an educated solidarity with other human beings in their hopes and fears and especially in their needs. We can’t pay attention to our experience and reflect on it without realizing how*

*our own lives are connected with the dreams of all those with whom we share the journey of human existence, and therefore with the economic, political, and social realities that support or frustrate their dreams. This is why Jesuit education is so often said to produce “men and women for others” (A Pocket Guide to Jesuit Education).*

This notion of engaging with the whole person encourages us to see all dimensions of the other, rather than reducing our relationship to a series of compartmentalized transactions and to open ourselves to those we encounter. By recognizing that each person has their own story, hopes, dreams, and vulnerabilities – and being present to them – we create greater opportunity to understand them as whole persons in a greater context.

In October 2000, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus at that time, spoke to representatives from Jesuit colleges and universities about their commitment to *cura personalis*, or education of the whole person.

*For 450 years, Jesuit education has sought to educate “the whole person” intellectually and professionally, psychologically, morally and spiritually. But in the emerging global reality, with its great possibilities and deep contradictions, the whole person is different from the whole person of the Counter-Reformation, the Industrial Revolution, or the 20th century. Tomorrow’s “whole person” cannot be whole without an educated awareness of society and culture with which to contribute socially, generously, in the real world. Tomorrow’s whole person must have, in brief, a well-educated solidarity..*

*We must therefore raise our Jesuit educational standard to “educate the whole person of solidarity for the real world.” Solidarity is learned through “contact” rather than through “concepts,” as the Holy Father said recently at an Italian university conference. When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change. Personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustice others suffer, is the catalyst for solidarity which then gives rise to intellectual inquiry and moral reflection.*

*Students, in the course of their formation, must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering, and engage it constructively. They should learn to perceive, think, judge, choose, and act for the rights of others, especially the disadvantaged and the oppressed.*

(The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education Address by Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Santa Clara University, October 6, 2000).

In his article “*Cura Personalis: Some Ignatian Inspirations*,” Boston College faculty member Barton T. Geger, S.J., explains the value of this care for the whole person for our students:

*In 1986, cura personalis received prominent exposure in a document entitled “The Characteristics of Jesuit Education,” published by the International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education. In a passage that reads as if it might have been drawn from Ledóchowski’s “Instruction,” we find: Teachers and administrators, both Jesuit and lay, are more than academic guides. They are involved in the lives of the students, taking a personal interest in the intellectual, affective, moral and spiritual development of every student.... They are ready to listen to their cares and concerns about the meaning of life, to share their joys and sorrows, to help them with personal growth and interpersonal relationships.... They try to live in a way that offers an example to the students, and they are willing to share their own life experiences. “Cura personalis” (concern for the individual person) remains a basic characteristic of Jesuit education (“Cura Personalis: Some Ignatian Inspirations,” Barton T. Geger, S.J., *Jesuit Higher Education* 3(2): 6-20 (2014).*

While Geger notes that St. Ignatius and the early Jesuits did not use the phrase *cura personalis*, the way they engaged the world in their ministry and teaching espoused an integrated approach to caring for the whole person.

The Jesuit value of caring for and educating the whole person fundamentally acknowledges the dignity of the human person,

which for Li is paramount in the way we advance technology, and live in our world:

“The common denominator to all of this,’ I said out loud, ‘whether it’s addressing the bias in our data or safeguarding patients in hospitals, is how our technology treats people. Their dignity, in particular. That’s the word I keep coming back to. How can AI, above all else, respect human dignity? So much follows from that,” (*The Worlds I See*, p. 302).

Boston College’s Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences Dean Gregory A. Kalscheur, S.J., makes explicit the connection of dignity to the Catholic Intellectual Tradition in an article titled, “Key Task for Catholic Higher Ed” as he writes, “The Catholic intellectual tradition is at work whenever questioning in any field is open to moving out of narrow disciplinary isolation and toward the horizon of human dignity, the common good, and the wholeness and fullness of life that the Christian tradition calls God’s reign,” (*Inside Higher Ed*, November 8, 2011).

In the same article, Kalscheur goes on to say that asking questions together and engaging in conversation are important dynamics of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition: “In the Catholic university, wisdom accumulated in the past is handed on, criticized, reworked, and reappropriated in response to new questions prompted by new experience, new evidence, new arguments, and new interlocutors. This way of proceeding gives life to the Catholic intellectual tradition.”

“A university animated by the Catholic intellectual tradition embraces all who are dedicated to learning from one another, and remains open to contributions that may come in a range of ways. This persuasion challenges a Catholic university to engage all people, cultures, and traditions in authentic conversation – conversation undertaken in the belief that by talking across traditions we can grow in shared understanding that opens all parties to the possibility of changing their views,” (*Inside Higher Ed*, November 8, 2011).

Care for the whole person and the recognition of dignity are also integrated into Ignatius' definition of conversation as "turning towards someone: to live with, keep company with and even to help oneself and the other person toward new experiences and new interpretations of them." The dignity of each one of us is called forth in many ways as part of the Boston College community, and there are many opportunities for students, administrators, faculty, and staff members to engage in conversation as each seeks to ask the big questions and be attentive to the world around us.

## CURIOSITY AND IMAGINATION

Curiosity and imagination are two ways that we become more attentive to and respond to the needs of the world around us.

In his article, "To be just, one must see 'justice' as a verb", published in the September 9, 2023 issue of *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, Kalscheur refers to former Superior General of the Society of Jesus Adolfo Nicolás, S.J.'s 2010 address to Jesuit educators in which he talked about the power of imagination.

"In a 2010 address to Jesuit educators, Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., suggested a powerful connection between a particular way of seeing the world and the transformation of character that might lead to a life of doing justice. He explained that the depth of thought and creative imagination that should characterize Jesuit education involve 'a profound engagement with the real, a refusal to let go until one goes beneath the surface' of things," Kalscheur writes.

"According to Nicolás, the starting point for discerning will always be what is real: 'the world of the senses so vividly described in the Gospels themselves; a world of suffering and need, a broken world with many broken people in need of healing. We start there. We don't run away from there.' Through the imaginative pedagogy of Ignatian contemplation, we are urged to enter into the depths of that reality. 'Beyond what can be perceived most immediately, [Ignatius] leads [us] to see the hidden presence and action of God in what is seen, touched, smelt, felt. And that encounter with what is deepest changes [us.]'

When we pay attention to the world in the way that Nicolás describes, we are changed. With this depth of vision, we are able to recognize God already at work in our world, healing, reconciling and loving. The depth of thought and creative imagination... enable us to integrate intellectual rigor with reflection on experience and creative imagination so that we might choose to act — working alongside our laboring God in constructing a world that is more humane, more just, and more faith-filled” (*Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, September 9, 2023).

Throughout *The Worlds I See*, Li acknowledges the place of curiosity and imagination in both her personal journey and her professional journey – how they impact her relationships and her approach to research. She credits her father as one of the first people to encourage curiosity by the example that he set:

“Without knowing it, he was showing me curiosity in its purest form.

The trips weren’t especially educational – my father was a lover of nature, not an expert on it – but they planted the seeds of a philosophy that would shape my life more than any other: an insatiable urge to search beyond my horizons” (*The Worlds I See*, p. 13).

Her father’s voice was joined by those of intellectual giants whose work Li encountered in her studies, including Albert Einstein and Neil deGrasse Tyson. It was deGrasse Tyson who exhorted his students to “Stay curious. Stay bold. Be forever willing to ask impossible questions” (*The Worlds I See*, p. 75).

These voices informed Li’s approach to science and she heard their words in her own voice, as she writes, “Countering that chorus of pragmatism was a voice inside me, no louder than a whisper but indefatigable, pleading with me to chase the spark of curiosity I’d felt since childhood... (*The Worlds I See*, p. 71).



## SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

Reflection is a key element in the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). In May 1521, Ignatius Loyola was wounded in a battle in Pamplona, Spain. His leg was shattered by a cannon ball and he was forced to return home to recover from this injury. For a wounded soldier returning home from battle, this was a time of shame and isolation. Ignatius spent several months convalescing and during that time he read two books, *The Life of Christ* and *Butler's Lives of the Saints*. The stories of others whom he encountered in these books encouraged him to reflect on his own life – his relationship with others, his relationship with himself, his relationship with God. This “cannonball moment” that led Ignatius into this reflective experience changed his life and as a result, Ignatius changed the world.

*Is there a moment in your life that changed your perspective?  
Have you had the time to reflect on what this moment has meant in  
your life? How has it changed you and how have you changed the  
world as a result?*

...

As Li reaches turning points in her academic and professional career, she experiences a tension between her own desires and what she perceives are her parents' expectations. She recounts her mother's reassurance of their support of and belief in her:

“Fei-Fei, you keep talking about this ‘selfish’ journey you’re on. As if science is something you’re taking from us.”

“How can I not feel that way? I could be earning a living for all of us right now, and –”



“You’re not hearing me. This has never been your journey. From the very beginning, this has been our journey. Whether you were fated to be a scientist, a researcher, or something else I can’t even imagine, and whether or not you’ll ever make more than a pittance doing it, we’ve been working toward it as a family since the moment our plane left that runway in Shanghai.”

I didn’t know what to say.

“I’m going to say this one last time: we didn’t come this far for you to give up now.”

She was right. She was always right. This time, for whatever reason, I finally heard her. I would never question my path again (*The Worlds I See*, p. 139).

***Who are the people who have shown support and belief in you? Who has accompanied you on your journey? What impact has that had?***

...

Li expresses gratitude for the mentors who support her, in particular for Mr. Sabella and his wife and children, who become family for Li.

“I wasn’t the only student who visited the Math Lab for help after class, but I soon became its most frequent visitor, and Mr. Sabella seemed to respect my appetite for learning. Likewise, I appreciated his patience; earning an immigrant’s trust can be a delicate task, but his dedication won me over. Week after week, the lectures became more abstract and problem sets more challenging - tangent vectors, arc length, partial derivatives, the chain rule—but I felt a freedom to confide in him as well, in ways I’d never thought possible with an American. He was the first person I opened up to about my family’s financial struggles or my teenage annoyances with my parents. Over time, he seemed to grow naturally into a role that combined teacher, guidance counselor, and friend. It was an outlet I’d lived without for too long” (*The Worlds I See*, p.63).

***Who are the people who have served as a mentor to or conversation partner with you? Who are the conversation partners you will seek out during your time at Boston College to help you consider your relationship with God, your relationship with others and the world around you, and your relationship with yourself?***

...

“Love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words” (SE 230). These words are offered by St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus – the Jesuits – in the fourth week of the Spiritual Exercises.

In his book, *The Ignatian Adventure*, Kevin O’Brien, S.J. expands upon this insight of St. Ignatius, “Love must be put into action; words are not enough... Ignatian spirituality is one of mission” (excerpted in *The Jesuit Post*, March 23, 2012).

***How do Li’s parents show their love to her throughout her life?  
Who are the people who have put love into action in your life?***

...

“The pursuit of opportunity without limits was my parents’ North Star. It was a vision that animated them like nothing else, carving a path through their lives so deep that it came to define them as people.

It was the same maniacal commitment that elevated my heroes from academics to scientists to legends. Now, still breathless from my first brush with real discovery, I found myself searching the skies for a North Star of my own: the kind of idea a question, a hypothesis, a bet-that any scientist worth their stripes would chase to the ends of the earth. Beyond, even.

I just needed to find it” (*The Worlds I See*, p. 97).

Later, Li revisits this idea of finding a North Star, saying, “I wanted to find a North Star of my own” (*The Worlds I See*, p. 117)

*What sparks your curiosity? What has animated you on your journey?  
How will you find your North Star during your time at Boston College?*

...

Conversations help us to tell our story, and to be curious about the stories of others. Li highlights the importance of understanding someone's story at several points in the book. Early on, she writes, "Whatever my family's story would be in the end, it was not yet written," (*The Worlds I See*, p. 68).

Later in the book, as Li's research has advanced, she realizes that her work has given her the privilege to shed light onto other people's stories: "I now wondered whether here, where we'd spent so much of our lives, I was in the presence of the stories that most needed to be told," (*The Worlds I See*, p. 245).

*As you enter Boston College, who has helped shape your story this far?  
Who will continue to shape your story over the course of the next four years?*

...

Li refers to the discernment that she engaged in as she worked to develop human-centered Artificial Intelligence:

"And that, I guess, is where things really get tricky. Because there's so much to consider in the meantime. A lot of good things and a lot of bad things, some of which actually might happen tomorrow. So, I hope you can appreciate the opportunity we're facing. We're playing a role in whatever comes next. We have to take that seriously. That's what makes an ethical framework so important. Something to help us evaluate every step we take, before we take it," (*The Worlds I See*, p. 291-292)

*What does creating an ethical framework mean to you? As our world struggles with divisiveness, what role do you play? How do you approach conversations about and across difference? What experiences have helped you empathize with people who are different from you? What experiences have helped you to be more vulnerable with people?*



## THE EXAMEN

The practice of discernment is an embodied one, one that engages the whole person. Li acknowledges the power of this embodied experience as she writes, “There’s just so much to know about life, I thought. And so much of it comes in through the eyes. I felt it in my gut and in my heart,” (The Worlds I See, p. 169). For St. Ignatius, this full engagement of ourselves with the world leads to a recognition of gratitude.

*What are the moments in which you feel a sense of gratitude?*

*One of the ways in which St. Ignatius made manifest his gratitude was through the Examen.*

The Ignatian tradition encourages reflection on our experience of God in the world in a mode of prayer called the Examen. The Examen is a prayer in five parts which helps individuals move through an examination of conscience, allowing the experiences of the day to guide one’s reflection. Its basis is in Christianity, but it can also be considered in light of other faith traditions.

*At first it might be helpful to move through all five of the points, spending two or three minutes on each, just to see what works for you. Or you may want to remain on the first point, giving thanks, after an especially great day. Or there may be times when you want to consider your career or a possible long-term relationship and then you might spend time on orienting your future. There is no single way to make the examination. The only essential is to bring your day before God. At the core of the examination is self-awareness before God. Its power lies in the way you become conscious of your own relationship with God, with your own spirituality.*

- **Giving Thanks.** *I thank God for the way God has met me today—in the work I have done, in the people I have encountered, in the letters from home, etc. I begin my prayer with the solid hope that God cares for me, knows me and loves me with an everlasting love.*
- **Seeking Light.** *I ask for light to understand the specific moments in which God has clarified who I am, what my gifts really are, and how I treat other people. I ask not to hide from the truth. I ask to be gentle with myself and honest, too. I ask to learn from God who I am.*
- **Reviewing Life.** *I go over the events of the day, noticing the ones where I felt closer to God and the ones where I felt distanced from God. Where today I met weakness or failure, I ask for forgiveness and self-acceptance. Where today I have lived faithfully and productively, I rejoice in God's service. God does not ask the impossible from me, only the good that I can do and be.*
- **Noting Patterns.** *I stand before my history as God does—lovingly wise about who I am, eager to make me part of the work of the Kingdom, allowing me to understand the patterns of my life that lead me to a more personal sense of how God calls me here at Boston College. Are there emerging insights about the life I should live? Are there difficulties that I keep trying to avoid and know I must face? Are there people, places and occasions that especially open me to God? And are there people, places, and occasions that bring out the worst in me? What does God want me to do with the person that I am becoming?*
- **Orienting My Future.** *Finally, I ask to live as Christ did. I look at the pattern of openness and the essentials of his teaching. I look at the trust he had in God's design for the world. I look at his availability to people. I accept the strategy of forgiveness, truthfulness and service that Christ portrayed.*

*I want to believe that I am called to live just as Christ was, as a woman or man for others. Of course, I will fail. But failure can be the way to wisdom and compassion if I use failure to know myself better and to understand the human heart more deeply. More important, I look ahead out of the successes of the day. I ask to live with a growing sense of God's trust in my future (The Red Book 2009, pp. 115, 117).*



## CONVERSATION AND CURIOSITY AT BOSTON COLLEGE

Boston College provides many opportunities to engage in conversation, express your curiosity, and engage more fully in the world. Below are just a few of the ways that might encourage you to ask the big questions over the next four years:

### **Worship and Prayer Life**

Boston College “invites students of all faiths – or even students of no faith, who might be searching for faith – to join us and integrate their religious life into their years at Boston College. Campus Ministry offers many opportunities for students to learn more about their own faith traditions and backgrounds, to celebrate and worship together, and to join in fellowship with others, both on campus and at area services” (<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/offices/mission-ministry/sites/campus-ministry/faith-communities.html>).

“Campus Ministry’s programming includes Sunday and weekday Masses, sacramental preparation for those who want to become Catholic or for Catholics seeking Confirmation, and many opportunities to come together in prayer” (<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/offices/mission-ministry/sites/campus-ministry/liturgy-sacraments.html>).

### **Agape Latte**

“Agape Latte is an international faith storytelling series founded at Boston College by the C21 Center and Campus Ministry” ([bc.edu/agapelatte](http://bc.edu/agapelatte)).

### **Retreats at Boston College**

“Retreats provide important opportunities to pause, reflect, and be refreshed. Campus Ministry’s retreat program offers a variety of experiences designed to help students of all faith backgrounds become more attentive to themselves, others, and God” ([bc.edu/retreats](http://bc.edu/retreats)).

### **Service and Immersion Programs**

“Campus Ministry’s service-immersion and solidarity programming introduces Boston College students, faculty, and staff to those around the world who are voiceless and marginalized, while encouraging participants to reflect on their experiences so they might better discern ways to actively engage with the world” (<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/offices/mission-ministry/sites/campus-ministry/service.html>).

### **The PULSE Program for Service Learning**

“The mission of the PULSE Program is to educate our students about social injustice by putting them into direct contact with marginalized populations and social change organizations and by encouraging discussion on classic and contemporary works of philosophy and theology” ([bc.edu/pulse](http://bc.edu/pulse)).

### **The Volunteer and Service Learning Center**

“The Volunteer and Service Learning Center is the primary portal for all service activity offered at Boston College, with a strong commitment to the Greater Boston community. We support the education and formation of our students by promoting conscientious service in the context of Catholic social teaching and contemporary Jesuit education” ([bc.edu/vslc](http://bc.edu/vslc)).

### **Ascend**

“Ascend is a program for first-year women through the Center for Student Formation where participants have an opportunity to meet new peers, engage in meaningful conversations about life at BC, and connect with upperclass women mentors. The program consists of weekly small group meetings (two leads, eight first-year women) facilitated by junior and senior women, small group



activities, optional program-wide events, and one off-campus overnight. The Ascend program officially launches at the start of Spring semester, but applications and interviews will take place during Fall semester” ([bc.edu/ascend](http://bc.edu/ascend)).

### **Freshmen League**

“The Freshmen League is a mentorship program for first-year men at BC. In the Spring semester, Freshmen join a team with seven other first-year guys and two upperclassmen leaders called Captains. The purpose of the program is to help first-year guys learn the ropes of BC, give them access to upperclassmen mentors, and take part in various off-campus outings with a group of BC guys” ([bc.edu/freshmenleague](http://bc.edu/freshmenleague)).

### **Compass Mentoring Program**

“The Compass mentoring program is an intentional involvement where first-year AHANA+ students (people of African, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and mixed descent) can connect with upperclass mentors, develop friendships, and gain a strong sense of community as they navigate their first semester at BC” ([bc.edu/compass](http://bc.edu/compass)).

### **48 Hours Weekend Experience**

“48hours is a weekend experience open to all first-year students who are interested in taking advantage of BC’s intellectual, social, and spiritual resources. Disrupt your regular routine for a weekend, hear from juniors and seniors about their experiences transitioning to BC, and gain a fuller understanding of the possibilities and challenges of a Jesuit education” ([bc.edu/48hours](http://bc.edu/48hours)).

### **Halftime**

“Halftime is an invitation to step back from your busy life to think about how your major and future career fit in with who you really are. It is an opportunity to have real conversations with students, faculty, and staff about finding and pursuing passions” ([bc.edu/halftime](http://bc.edu/halftime)).

Teach us, good Lord, to serve You  
as You deserve;  
to give and not to count the cost;  
to fight and not to heed the wounds;  
to toil and not to seek for rest;  
to labor and not to ask for any reward,  
save that of knowing that we do your will.

–St. Ignatius Loyola

### **Falling in Love with God**

Nothing is more practical than finding God,  
that is, falling in love  
in a quite absolute, final way.  
What you are in love with,  
what seizes your imagination,  
will affect everything.  
It will decide  
what will get you out of bed in the morning,  
what you will do with your evenings,  
how you will spend your weekends,  
what you read,  
who you know,  
what breaks your heart,  
and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.  
Fall in love,  
stay in love,  
and it will decide everything.

–Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

*This reading guide was developed by Maura Colleary,  
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CONVERSATIONS IN THE FIRST YEAR:  
A PROGRAM OF THE OFFICE OF FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE



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