IBCS Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic:

The coronavirus shall not steal our Easter Joy or our IBCS spirit!

As the Christian community enters into the high, holy feast days of the Church year, let us be reminded that through it all, Christ reigns! In that spirit, the 41st session of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies will take place as scheduled Sunday, June 28 through Friday, July 17, 2020.

Due to the public health emergency presented by the nationwide outbreak of COVID-19, this year’s session – classes and Community Life - will be conducted online out of an abundance of concern for the health of IBCS students, faculty and staff. From an administrative perspective, the transition from an on-campus program with face-to-face instruction to a virtual, online learning experience is proving to be quite a testing feat. However, with the collaboration of Xavier University of Louisiana and IBCS staff, we will virtually gather as the institute community on June 28 for Student Orientation and the Opening Liturgy.

The **IBCS staff** has been working in collaboration with many others in preparation for that day. Our staff consists of Program Specialist Dana Lockett and myself. I will be telecommuting from home. Additional collaborators include Associate Director for the Degree Program, Dr. Kirk Gaddy; Associate Director for the Continuing Education & Enrichment (C&E) Programs, Dr. Eva Lumas, S.S.S.; Associate Director for Community Life, Dr./Fr. Roy Lee, Ms. Gwendolyn Young, Ms. Angela Hollier and Fr. Manuel Williams. We are in the process of updating the IBCS website [https://www.xula.edu/ibcs](https://www.xula.edu/ibcs) with revised program details and course information. We are working to promote the 2020 Degree, the C&E programs, as well as unique ways for the IBCS at-large to participate in **Community Life**. Fr. Roy and our team are busily planning how to incorporate the prayer, worship and celebration aspects that make the IBCS formation holistic.

Xavier’s Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) is working with IBCS faculty via the ZOOM platform on **alternative methods of delivering instruction** that will allow our programs to maintain the intimate and interactive learning environment that supports the rigorous instruction that takes place in the typical IBCS classroom setting. CAT staff will also provide a training module to help orient students to the Xavier University system of remote learning. They will stand by us during the institute session to provide instructional support as needed.

At this point, the 2020 **IBCS Degree program** is established. As faculty members respond, Ms. Lockett will post the course reading lists. For ThM program questions and advice, Dr. Gaddy can be reached by email at [kgaddy@xula.edu](mailto:kgaddy@xula.edu).

**Degree students** apply through the XULA Graduate School: [https://gradapply.xula.edu/apply](https://gradapply.xula.edu/apply).
As currently constructed, the C&E program is more complex to convert and bulky to manage in an online environment. Ms. Lockett has provided Sr. Eva (still recovering from knee replacement surgery) the course selections of C&E students who have already completed the application process. She will work with instructors to reformat the 2020 offerings in response to student needs for instruction and CEUs. We will also downsize some week-long offerings into shorter learning experiences. Converting to remote learning has been challenging but we will post a revised C&E program as soon as it ready. I urge students again to apply/reapply using the C&E links on the website. Returning C&E students: https://gradapply.xula.edu/register/IBCS_CE_READMIT. New C&E students should apply using this link: https://gradapply.xula.edu/register/IBCS_CE_NEW.

The IBCS Program application links and the link to the Scholarship Application are live and working. Please note that the regular application process deadline has been extended. Students will be eligible to apply for a scholarship ONLY during the regular application process – February 3- May 12, 2020. Consideration will only be given to those applicants who have completed the program application and submitted all supporting documentation for the scholarship request. IBCS donors are generous but scholarship funds are limited.

Fr. Roy has advised that we are all going through a paradigm shift. Change is becoming the norm. God does not change and in these uncertain times, gathering as the body of Christ to learn, pray, worship and celebrate can be good for the soul. The IBCS extends itself to the entire community: current students/faculty, potential students, alumni, former instructors, friends, donors. We hope to offer newcomers a taste of the institute to see what we are about and explore how Christ might be beckoning.

For more information or help with inquiries, please contact Dana Lockett at 504-520-6971 during office hours or email her at ibcs@xula.edu.

Let us lift in prayer all who are affected by the coronavirus and remember especially the healthcare workers, maintenance teams, and essential staff serving in commercial settings. Let us ask God’s special care for those who have died as well their loved ones in addition to those currently suffering with the disease and those who are neglected, homeless and in abusive situations. Through the cross, may we learn to be more loving!

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