By Pat Haggerty

There is something so wonderful about serendipitous events. They sneak up on us and bring us unexpected surprise and wonder. Such was the event that took place for me while on a visit to Los Angeles.

I was preparing for a week-long institute on service-learning at Loyola-Marymount University in Los Angeles, California. It was Sunday morning and I was in my hotel room not too far from the campus. I found out that there was a Mass at 10:00, so I decided to venture forth and walk to campus. I wasn't exactly sure of the quickest way to get to the Chapel of the Sacred Heart, but I took my chances. Once on Loyola Boulevard, I knew I couldn't be too far from my destination. Loyola Boulevard led me directly to the campus and walking through the main entrance I could see the chapel in plain view.

I proceeded to the chapel. Once I opened the doors I was engulfed in beauty, community, and utter jubilation. The choir was singing "Laudate Dominum" and the congregation was singing out. I felt overcome with emotion. Since I am a music minister myself, there is nothing I enjoy more than beautiful music to enhance a liturgy. This was beyond what I had expected! The choir was small but there was a piano, an organ, a trumpet, a flute, and some percussion to accompany them.

When I looked down at the special mass brochure, I realized I was in the midst of a celebration for the feast of St. Ignatius Loyola, the patron and founder of the Jesuits—the very order that served Loyola-Marymount. It couldn't have been a more jubilant celebration or a more emotionally-filled witness to community.

As the entire congregation sang the words of "Lead Us, Lord, to Love and Labor," I sang with gratitude in my heart. I was thankful that the Spirit had brought me to such a meaningful Eucharistic celebration. I sang out: "Let us hear you speaking still: Words of wisdom and compassion, Calling all to know your will."

I knew that I had been blessed, and I knew that I had to give my all during the week for the

service-learning institute. I needed to “give myself freely” just as the closing song suggested.