



Mr. Vinnie Sullivan-Jacques, Assistant Director of Campus Ministry

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By Madeline McLean '16

“Reach out your hand if your cup be empty, if your cup is full may it be again, let it be known there is a fountain, that was not made by the hands of men.” The lyrics of the Grateful Dead’s song “Ripple” were recited by Vinnie Sullivan-Jacques during his talk on Monday September 29. These song lyrics helped, along with many other people and events, to shape Sullivan-Jacques’ path.

Sullivan-Jacques is currently the director of the Reach Out Center, assistant director of Campus

Ministry and is also the assistant men's lacrosse coach. On top of all of this, he is a gifted speaker and many students found him to be compelling at Assumption College's Agape Latte.

Students who attended Agape Latte on Monday, September 29 at 8:30 p.m. in Charlie's were enchanted by Sullivan-Jacques' story. Agape Latte is a program that began at Boston College, put on by Campus Ministry. Students listen to a different speaker talk about their inspirational spiritual journeys, at each event, often.

The Agape Latte program is offered once a month, or three times a semester. The word "agape" literally translates to "unconditional love" or God's love. Agape Latte is about listening to people explain how they have felt this love and how it has shaped their lives thus far.

During the talk, students were welcomed to grab a free cup of coffee, tea or a dessert, which made it a fun and casual talk about life, love and God. In the past, Assumption's Agape Latte has had the science department's Professor David Crowley and the football Coach Bob Chesney.

The Grateful Dead lyrics Sullivan-Jacques recited meant more to him than just a good memory. When a visiting priest at Sullivan-Jacques' high school, St. John's High School in Shrewsbury, Mass., played "Ripple" after his homily, it opened Sullivan-Jacques' eyes.

"The most profound thing I think about that song, that moment that I had, was that I had to think about some really deep questions, deep questions of life," said Sullivan-Jacques.

He began to think about creating his own ripples and how that would affect others. Sullivan-Jacques also started to truly wonder about God's existence, which seemed relevant to his audience of spiritually growing students.

"And after I listened to that song I came to one simple conclusion as a high-schooler; That I was a person on a spiritual journey and in a world that was created by great love," said Sullivan-Jacques.

“I found Vinnie’s talk very inspiring because he was able to talk about things that we as college students go through every day, said junior Shannon MacDonnell. His talk made me feel that all the things we go through, that seem like such a big deal, are just a small piece of our journey,”

Sullivan-Jacques felt that listening to this song helped guide him to where he is now.

He was also led to this conclusion by his older sister Vanessa, who passed away too soon. Despite having physical challenges, Vanessa had always encouraged him and his family to help others through community service, one of her favorite things to do. Vanessa’s good nature and light was shed upon anyone who met her.

“She taught me one of the most profound things: that each one of us has a special gift and in that special gift we make this world a more beautiful place,” remarked Sullivan-Jacques.

Many audience members found his story about his loving sister to be eye-opening.

“I thought it was great how he opened up about his experiences and how his faith helped him to grow as a person and affect others,” said junior Kailey Filiere.

Sullivan-Jacques’ talk inspired each student in the audience to make the world a more beautiful place and to grow as individuals. He gave three different encouragements so that students all could achieve this sense of fulfillment and to have a positive ripple effect.

The first was to travel, to go somewhere new and experience other peoples’ ripples, as he has throughout his life. Assumption offers some opportunities to travel somewhere new, while also helping others, through the Reach Out Center’s SEND trips during both the winter and spring breaks.

“Make sure that you keep those people that are marginalized in our society...close to you, because you really never know what someone else can teach you,” said Sullivan-Jacques as his second encouragement.

“The last encouragement”, he said. “Try something unexpected. Try something that people might think you’re a little bit crazy for doing,” encouraged Sullivan-Jacques.

Taking each of these encouragements, students left the program feeling empowered and ready to make their own ripples.

“I thought it was an inspiration to anyone who heard it,” said junior, Mary Kate Petterson. “Vinnie has a story that speaks to everyone. His passion for service and loving others is something we can all learn from, and he has undoubtedly made a ripple on the Assumption College community.”

Save the dates for the next Agape Latte events on October 20 and November 17 at 8:30 p.m. in Charlie’s.

Brother Ron Sibugan, AA, a member of the Campus Ministry team, was the one responsible for launching Agape Latte at Assumption.