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Brother Gene Lappin Lauds Salve Regina's New Master of Arts in Liberal Studies: to Teach Program's "Great Writers" Course

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NEWS RELEASE
Salve Regina - The Newport College

Office of Public Relations
(401) 847-6650 ext. 223

Newport, Rhode Island 02840

CONTACT: Lyn Patterson
847-6650, ext. 223

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BRO. GENE LAPPIN LAUDS SALVE REGINA'S
NEW MASTER OF ARTS IN LIBERAL STUDIES;
TO TEACH PROGRAM'S "GREAT WRITERS" COURSE

He is a philosopher. A wordsmith. A linguist. A lover of literature, music, the arts. And mankind. A Renaissance man, if you will. Thus, the nation's slow but steady move to a return of a broad-based liberal arts education couldn't please him more.

"We've had many problems in education in the last 20 years," Brother Gene Lappin says. "We've become too specialized; we're turning out people who are skilled at what they do, but aren't content with their lives. To be truly educated, a person must also be able to think rationally about the problems that face him in life and be able to deal with those problems."

Bro. Gene is chairman of the English and Modern Languages Department at Salve Regina - The Newport College. Because of his initiative, and others like him, Salve now offers the only master of arts in Liberal Studies (M.A.L.S.)

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in Rhode Island. The College's new M.A.L.S. students are enrolling now for the program's first courses this fall.

But of course, for Bro. Gene, there must be much more than mere initiative to justify working so long to establish such a strange companion for the more common, specialized programs found on university campuses today.

For Bro. Gene, there must be a deep-founded belief that a return to a broad-based liberal arts program is the route education should chart as it progresses through the 80's. And he does believe. He uses the Renaissance man he is compared to, to illustrate his point.

"A Renaissance man is a person who is interested in all branches of knowledge," Bro. Gene says. "He is one who can dialogue with those in the arts or the sciences. He can bridge the gap and make things move more smoothly between two different groups."

The revival of liberal arts study is definitely growing and spreading Bro. Gene says. And, in his opinion, not a moment too soon.

For some students, of course, there is some trepidation. Without a specialized education, are they competitive in today's job market?

Absolutely. From an economic standpoint, Bro. Gene says managers are discovering that liberal arts graduates are, indeed, valuable employees, because their more broad-based education aids them in reaching higher levels of personal, interpersonal and social contentment. "These individuals will work better, and so achieve more," he says.

And from a philosophical standpoint? "They have the personal satisfaction they gain by studying the world from four different viewpoints," Bro. Gene says. "You can't put a price tag on that."

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He says that with the authority of one who knows, perhaps because his own life is patterned after the broad, liberal arts education he advocates. Yes, he admits to speaking a few languages. But that might be expected from one who holds a Ph.D. in Romance Languages from Harvard University. He is fluent in French, Spanish and Italian, but also does passably well in German and Amharic (the official language of Ethiopia he learned while teaching at a private high school with other members of his order, the Brothers of Christian Schools).

Bro. Gene will be instructing the Liberal Studies course "The Great Writers" this fall, and he is quick to emphasize that the writings of these men (Plato, Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas, among others) are still relevant to today's contemporary society.

"The great writers were people of common sense who struggled, just as we do today, with the fundamental questions of life, " Bro. Gene says. "What is it we do to become happy? What do you love? Whom do you love? Why do you love? Is it good for us . . . or good for all? The great writers stimulate us to reflect on matters we might otherwise take for granted. They encourage us to look at their approaches in the past to help us obtain the happiness we seek today."

Bro. Gene appears to have learned the masters' lessons well. He enjoys people and teaching; he sees himself still deeply involved in education 10 years from now, continuing to practice what he preaches.

After all, he says, "It's what you do that makes people know what you are."