

MARIA PIETA AWARD

Honors Convocation
May 7, 1995

Saint Augustine claimed that a teacher is someone who prompts a student to learn. Affirming Augustine's insight, the poet and teacher Mark Van Doran said: "The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery." A Saint Mary's alumna quoted Van Doran after encountering a student who had enrolled in a class taught by this year's Maria Pieta awardee. The student described the class at Saint Mary's as "the best and most useful class that he took during his four years at Notre Dame University."

Students and faculty on the Saint Mary's campus have recognized the value of our awardee's courses since his first years here. A current junior comments: "I cannot say enough good things about this [teacher]. [He] is not simply a teacher, but a mentor and a friend. I think that my parents probably [get] tired of me telling them how thankful I [am] to be at Saint Mary's just so that I could take this class." A faculty member in another department notes: "I've lost track of the number of times that I have heard students sing [his] praises in my presence, but everything that I have heard from [his] students suggests a teacher who takes seriously their concerns and engages them in careful and sensitive inquiry....Students trust [him] as a person they can talk to about their struggles to come to terms with difficult and personally challenging issues...."

By the testimony of many, this year's awardee has an uncommon commitment to students and to their education. His planning and organization of courses are meticulous, with syllabi detailing the semester's work with clarity and precision. A colleague speaks of him as a born teacher who works assiduously at the art of teaching. A local high school teacher has said with pride that his own class design is based precisely on the course taken at Saint Mary's. And the students, many, many students have voted with their feet, waiting each semester to sign up for courses offered by this professor.

Those students are rewarded by their encounter with a man of keen mind, quick-wittedness, friendly humor, and a thoughtful approach to pedagogy. It was not that long ago that he avidly learned what he now teaches in religious studies courses. He graduated summa cum laude in philosophy and theology from the University of Notre Dame, went on to Princeton for his doctorate in religion, and now prompts Saint Mary's students in their search for truth, goodness and beauty in the classrooms of Madeleva Hall.

With the recent birth of his son, 1995 has become a special year. We offer another reason for rejoicing with the presentation of the 1995 Maria Pieta Award to Joseph M. Incandela of the Department of Religious Studies.