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## One Community, One Family

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# One Community, One Family

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Friday December 22, 2017

By Eric F. Spina

While the University of Dayton is a committed Catholic, Marianist university, we recognize that we don't all share the same faith or cultural traditions. Many of us grew up in diverse towns and cultures--from Chicago and St. Henry to Riyadh and San Juan. Yet, we are one community, one family.

During this blessed time of the year, I'm touched by the welcoming and supportive spirit of our campus community that transcends the Christmas season. Recently, I received two heartwarming notes from University of Dayton students that illustrate who we are at our best.

Rosemarie Fortune, a sophomore psychology major from Long Grove, Illinois, says she will never forget the chilly fall day she fell in love with UD. Her father could not walk on the campus tour without feeling excruciating pain because of an artificial hip. A student tour guide, not scheduled to work, suddenly showed up out of nowhere with a golf cart to conduct the tour.

"I was honestly speechless," Rosemarie wrote, "because for the first time on my college visits, my father and I could go on a campus tour together. This University is full of people who would go above and beyond to help you in any way they could. This is what makes the University of Dayton, that word you hear so very often, a community."

Before graduation last weekend, Abraham Elmushyakhi visited my office and presented me with a framed letter of gratitude to the University of Dayton community. "I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the University of Dayton and faculty whose unselfish willingness to dedicate their life to teaching influenced me to strive towards academic excellence," the letter read.

Abraham, a Saudi Arabian student who earned his master and doctoral degrees in materials engineering from UD, said he will always treasure the opportunities and friendships here. "This university is huge," he wrote, "but you have never made me feel like just a number. Every day I thank God for this unique experience."

The humility and depth of appreciation from these two students moved me deeply — and reminded me that we are one community, one family. As I share these two simple stories, I know each of you can add many other meaningful, personal stories about the ways this

University community we treasure and love have touched you.

From our family to yours, Karen, Kaitlyn, Emery, and I wish you a joyful Christmas filled with the gifts of faith, hope, and love.

As 2018 beckons, let's devote ourselves to building even stronger bonds of community — on campus and in the world. The story of Christ's birth brings such grace to our lives and hope to our world.

Merry Christmas!