

# **UNITED BOARD FELLOWSHIP VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY, INDIANA, U.S.**

**19 August to 19 December 2013**

## **Valparaiso University**

Valparaiso University is a Lutheran University in Valparaiso, Indiana, an hour's drive from Chicago. Founded in 1859, Valpo offers liberal arts as well as professional training and graduate study, helping students find their own paths to lifelong personal, spiritual, and professional growth. The five undergraduate colleges of the university offer more than 70 majors. The Graduate school offers over 40 master's and two doctorate degrees. It has 3,000 undergraduate students, 1,100 Law and graduate students, 220 full-time faculty from most U.S. States and about 50 countries. The average class size is 22 and the student-faculty ratio is 19:1. On the service-learning front, the students combine perform an average of 60,000 hours of service annually. The university has study centres in England, Germany, Costa Rica, and China besides running 17 international programs in Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America.

## **My Experience at Valpo**

This short stint at Valpo has been an eye-opening and enriching academic experience for me. I have been able to participate in Faculty enhancement workshop, Academic overture and Inter-religious Council on Dialogue and Spirituality. The teaching-learning process at Valpo includes many creative and innovative practices. I have been able to sit-in on lectures of eminent professors of the Departments of English, Philosophy and Theology. I have had also the opportunity to engage in team-teaching, and make a presentation on Vajrayana Buddhism. Regular discussions with the Exchange-Visitor Programme Coordinator Prof. Hugh McGuigan, Mentors Prof. John Ruff and Prof. Shodhin Geiman, and other professors on matters of teaching and learning practices, course design and evaluation have given me an understanding of the best practices in American Higher Education. In the coming days I will be meeting academic administrators on matters of academic leadership and organization. The weekly Scholars' Social hour gives me the opportunity to meet professors from other universities of the world who come on Exchange-visitor and faculty enhancement programs. I also had the opportunity to visit other Universities like

American Catholic University- Washington, Fordham University- New York, and Notre Dame University- South Bend.

Valpo has a vibrant campus life. So far I have had the opportunity to participate in events like The Opening convocation, International students' Welcome Tea party, Taste of Valpo, Popcorn Festival, Chinese Moon Festival, Valpo International Festival, International food Festival and Home coming.

The exposure to American Higher Education in general and the best practices of Valparaiso University in particular help in understanding the trajectory of Higher Education in the US. There is much that can be learned in terms of teaching, learning and evaluating processes, in achieving expected learning outcomes, and in grooming the person to be upright, productive, and enlightened citizens.

Fr. Tomy Augustine, sdb



