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## Nursing Students Participate in First Annual Blessing of the Hands

Kim Foito, *Sacred Heart University*

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Approximately 70 nursing students participated in Sacred Heart University's first annual Blessing of the Hands ceremony in the University's Chapel of the Holy Spirit. The inaugural event took place Friday, September 7.

"We wanted to focus on tradition as that is a theme that resonates with the students," said Kim Foito, clinical assistant professor of Nursing. "The onset of the clinical experience is a milestone. The nursing faculty at Sacred Heart recognizes the value of spirituality. We planned this celebration to embody the great significance our hands represent in healing." After having their own hands anointed by Father Jerry Ryle, the nursing faculty blessed the hands of the students. The group included juniors who are starting their clinical rotation and seniors who will continue this year. The students also received a prayer card containing a passage that can be recited prior to patient care experiences, Foito said.



*Nursing students approach the faculty for a blessing of the hands. .*

She said the Blessing of the Hands is not new to nursing. "Ceremonies such as this are often held during Nurse's Week to recognize the caring and competence of this profession. The hands are a critical tool for nurses, and we thought this would be a meaningful way to celebrate this stage of their nursing education. We hope students will come away with a sense of spiritual awareness and realize their faculty are celebrating their commitment to caring."

Dr. John J. Petillo, president of the SHU, also emphasized the healing nature of the hands in his remarks to the students.



Candela is also motivated by her clinical rotation. "It's so nice to feel as if you are a nurse and to get a feel for what it's like in reality. It's great to see that the nurses we work with, even with their rigorous schedules and long hours, still enjoy their jobs. That's really the beauty of it. I can't wait to help and take care of someone," she said. "The Blessing of the Hands ceremony was the perfect way to start off the semester. The motivating speeches given by the nursing faculty, President Petillo and Father Jerry brought to light the very reasons why I want to become a nurse. The ceremony left me very inspired to continue the compassionate care we give to our patients each week in clinical,"

said Kelly Rogers, a senior.

Added Theresa Candela, a junior, "The ceremony was a wonderful experience. It was very touching and very nice to feel appreciated for all the hard work we do to succeed in our program. When our hands were blessed, I felt proud and became very excited for my future and to continue on my path of becoming a nurse. I hope they continue to do this ceremony for many years to come."

"The Blessing of the Hands ceremony was an incredible tradition to start. As nursing students we may lose sight of the big picture with day-to-day stresses about learning new skills or taking exams. The ceremony was able to pull all of our hard work and dedication into a meaningful and gratifying state," said junior Lizzie Scatterday. "We may not realize how important our journey to becoming a nurse really is until something like this ceremony happens. As students and soon to be RNs, we can actually take a second to pat ourselves on the back for all we have accomplished and for all that we will continue to do for ourselves and our patients. The ceremony allowed me personally to take a step back, embrace myself with all the other students and be proud of where we are and where we are going. It motivated us to continue to work hard to use not only our hands but our minds in every way possible."