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## Introduction

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Theatre Professor Robert Hubbard was “dazed” by an unexpected rainbow he saw while stopping to catch his emotional and spiritual breath at Oak Grove State Park, some 25 miles west of us here in Orange City. As he recounts in “On ECT and Rainbows,” his reflection piece in this issue, he was weighed down by that day’s rough visitation with one of his sons who was receiving treatment for clinical depression. Actually, he was weighed down not only by that day’s visitation, but by some three years of agonizing, wounding relations with not only one but two of his sons—and with God. The rainbow is a divine sign of promise to Noah and all humanity in Genesis 9:12-17. What, if anything, did it mean for Hubbard?

Divine promise is central to hope that endures despite the vagaries of the human condition. Jesus Christ—God incarnate, crucified, and resurrected—is Promise and Hope. Yet discerning Christ amidst the mundane, the horrible, and all in-between situations takes not only disciplined desire but also attentiveness. “Pay attention,” declares Frederick Buechner; “As a summation of all that I have had to say as a writer, I would settle for that. And as a talisman or motto for that journey in search of a homeland, which is what faith is, I would settle for that too.”<sup>1</sup> Otherwise, rainbows might be missed.

At the mundane end of the continuum, absent rainbows, politeness seems worth paying attention to, for it promises dignifying other people as fellow human creatures. Without politeness in everyday interactions, the social fabric frays. Yet as Diana Gonzalez, Associate Professor of Spanish, notes in her *Review* conference paper “There is Virtue and Variation in the Expression of Politeness,” there is virtue in politeness even as it varies in its common expression

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Buechner, *Secrets in the Dark: A Life in Sermons* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 183.

not only between English- and Spanish-speaking cultures but also within the latter's different nationalities. Drawing attention to both the virtue and the variations, Gonzalez concludes, is important for teaching students in the Spanish language.

Stepping back from Gonzalez's argument about politeness, Spanish Instructor Kristin McDonald lays out in "Encountering the Other" some ways for fostering intercultural attentiveness and humility in students in study abroad experiences. Harking back to themes in Gonzalez's "[Listening with Humility](#)" article in the previous issue of *Northwestern Review*, McDonald's article in this issue specifies various faith-informed approaches she takes in her courses for study abroad students in order to foster (recalling Buechner's motto) paying attention culturally.

The final *Review* piece this issue—"Our People Excel in the Love of Education" by historian Douglas Firth Anderson—gives attention to the origins of Northwestern itself. To the Dutch Reformed colonists of northwest Iowa in the 1880s, Northwestern Classical Academy incarnated their educational hopes and also helped promise (rainbow-like) a flourishing future to their settlement community.

Our hope for readers is that in this collection of articles you will find, if not a rainbow of some sort, at least some shards of reflected light.

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