Loyola Excerpt

“Returning to the small town of Azpeitia to spend a weekend at the Basilica and Sanctuary of Loyola has always been a special opportunity. Students ask if things have changed much since I first went on the retreat two and a half years ago and I tell them that they really haven’t. Aside from the changing group of great campus ambassadors, the retreat is run in the same general way. And I love it. In a few words, it’s relaxing, soothing, eye-opening, and fun. Town tours and good food aside, the real experience is self-examination. Students are encouraged to think about their lives and open-up to each other in a vulnerable sort of way. On the first day, everyone is asked to write the feelings that they bring, would like to leave, and hope to find at Loyola on post-it notes and stick them to a whiteboard to stay for the weekend. Students give talks on topics such as who Jesus is to them, how to be better men and women for others, and life-changing experiences that have shaped who they are. The spirit of St. Ignatius abounds and the whole complex itself brings about intense feelings of spirituality. The retreat ends with a final mass in the Chapel of the Conversion, the very room in St. Ignatius’ childhood home where he dedicated his life to God, with the offering of the feelings and hopes written on the first day. This trip to the Basque Country is not a simple getaway from the business of the university and life in general. It aims to be a rejuvenation of the mind, body, and soul. Friendships are made through this gathering of faith that will last for years, I can attest to that myself. After spending my fourth and final weekend retreat at Loyola with SLU-Madrid, I’m both thankful and glad to have had the opportunity to share in the joy of so many students over the past few semesters and I hope that the word continues to spread of what a wonderful experience this retreat has to offer.”

Nick Edmundson