Arroyo Comes to DeSales

By Tasha Loch

As part of the fourth annual Heritage Week, DeSales University hosted award-winning journalist, producer, and best selling author, Raymond Arroyo. The event was held on Wednesday, Jan. 21 at 7:30 p.m. in the White Pavilion of the University Center.

Formerly Patron Day, St. Francis de Sales is now honored with a week full of events rather than just one single occasion. This way there can be a variety of subjects students are interested in, and it will touch a wider audience. “We’re offering a buffet instead of just one dish,” states Rev. Thomas Dailey, OSFS, and Director of the Salesian Center for Faith and Culture, who sponsored the event.

This year marks the 400th anniversary of St. Francis de Sales’ “Introduction to the Devout Life.” So what better way to celebrate the Patron Saint of Journalism than with someone as acclaimed as Raymond Arroyo?

Originally from New Orleans, Arroyo came from a family of what he calls “middle class ethnic Catholics.” His religion has always been a huge part of his life and something he could never escape.

Arroyo brought his faith with him to New York City where he studied acting under the famous teachings of Stella Adler. Although Arroyo admits he was far from sainthood, his faith never left him. He always found it necessary to preserve and defend the teachings of the church.

Continuing his career in theater, Arroyo performed with the Shakespeare Company in England for a season and a half. He soon became bored with theater, though, disliking the constant repetition it brought about; however, Arroyo still loves theater. “It’s in my blood,” he states.

He also shares a love for writing, and was an avid contributor to the NYU newspaper. So, Arroyo decided to take a shot at writing for the Associated Press. He got his start as a theater critic and worked his way up.

From there, Arroyo went to Washington D.C., the “Hollywood for the ugly,” according to Bob Novak, a political journalist and
Arroyo’s co-worker for a year and a half. Under Novak, Arroyo not only got to co-write articles and interview sources, but he also got to see the very ugly side of journalism.

In 1995, a D.C. publisher asked Arroyo to do a piece on Mother Angelica. At the time, he really had no idea who she was; however, while researching her, Arroyo became fascinated. He regards Mother Angelica like his grandmother and describes her as “tough and Italian, my kind of gal!”

After only meeting Arroyo for the first time, Angelica proposed that he come to Birmingham, Alabama and start a news operation. Arroyo pretty much thought the idea was ludicrous.

Taking a good look at his life, Arroyo came to the conclusion that he was tired of covering Capitol Hill. It was the same repetition as theater, and he felt he was wasting his life.

As fate would have it, at that moment, the phone rang. It was Angelica asking if Arroyo had given any more thought to her proposition. She said, “This will be good for your soul.” Her persistency paid off.

Arroyo has been with EWTN (Eternal Word Television Network), the only international Catholic television station, for twelve years. He is the news director and host of “The World Over,” in which he gives exclusive interviews, investigative reports, and coverage of special events from around the world.

Arroyo has written two bestsellers, “Mother Angelica: The Remarkable Story of a Nun, Her Nerve and a Network of Miracles” and “Mother Angelica’s Little Book of Life Lessons and Everyday Spirituality.” When asked why he chose to write about Angelica, Arroyo simply replied, “I love her.” Through their friendship she would tell him things about her life. Arroyo felt everyone should know who she was and what she had to say. After years of doing hundreds of interviews, and reading her letters and diaries, Arroyo was finally able to tell Mother Angelica’s life story.

He has also conducted a historically momentous interview with Pope Benedict XVI, the only conversation ever recorded in English. Arroyo recalls the event as “a joy.”

“[The Pope] is as warm and funny as he is holy. He has a dry sense of humor,” Arroyo commented. He went on to say, “The Pope is often misread because he’s shy.”

Arroyo’s job is to bring out a personality that no one has seen before, but always making sure, whomever he interviews, that he or she feels comfortable.

Currently, Arroyo still writes articles for several well-known newspapers, his favorite being the Wall Street Journal. “They have fine, real reporting,” he states. “They also have a wider subscription than
most, with a daily circulation to approximately two million people. That’s huge for a newspaper today.”

Arroyo’s also working on two musicals which he could not disclose any information about other than that they are very difficult. Musicals take three art forms, acting, dancing and singing, which must be fused together. It takes a long time. Arroyo has a wife and three kids that keep him busy, so don’t expect to see one of his musicals anytime soon.

But, do be sure to see this hugely entertaining speaker every Friday at 8:00 p.m. on EWTN’s “The World Over.” Encore performances are Saturday at 1:00 a.m., Sunday at 4:00 p.m., and Monday at 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m.