

Raymond Kennedy Award

April 30, 2005

Three years ago this month, when I accepted Siena's offer to teach here, a friend asked: Why Siena?
In response, I only said "It feels right!"

That night, in my usual bedtime review of my day, in search of the reasons why I had responded the way I did, I remembered my campus visit of a month earlier.

Then when I met the President for the first time--a slender man in a brown robe--I wondered if a religious college was really the place for me.

I knew nothing about St. Francis, so I thought I'll ask him, and I did.
The more he spoke, the more I felt I knew this tradition.

For almost all of my adult life, I had studied a poet, Rumi, a contemporary of St. Francis, who said

"Come, whoever you are.
Wonderer, worshipper, lover of leaving
It doesn't matter.
Ours is not a caravan of despair.
Come, even if you have broken your vows a thousand times
Come, yet again, come."

I realized that both prophets preached the same things: acceptance, tolerance and love.

LOVE. I knew this word well. I had studied what I loved. I had worked in the field I loved. I had shared what I loved with those I love most, the younger generation. I had lived love all my life.

For those of us who live in theatre, life is indeed a stage, and we are all players. And as players we, ourselves, are the first to realize if what we do on this stage, works. Because when it works, "it feels right!"

We know that our play will not communicate with our audience without a sincere and honest give and take between the players.

That our audience will only actively participate in the learning process, if we, their teachers, work with each other, receive from each other, and generously give to one another.

In these past three years, I have received much from my colleagues here at Siena, and hopefully have given them some.

I have learned much from my students, and hopefully have taught them some.

I have received much love from the community, both within and without Siena's walls, and hopefully have shared some.

For all this I am thankful. I am thankful to the administration for giving me the opportunity to serve this community.

I am thankful to my colleagues for supporting me in my various projects. And I am thankful to my students for what they have taught me.

I am also thankful to my friend and colleague Dr. Michael Sham, for nominating me for this prestigious award, and to Siena for offering it to me.

And finally I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my twin daughters, Baran and Shaparak, and to my wife Leila, whose understanding and respect for my art has afforded me the time to do to the work I love.

Thank you.