

## NURSING

### Teaching Nursing Using the Ignatian Principles

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When I was asked if I would like to participate in the Ignatian mentoring program, it was with trepidation that I agreed. I am a full-time doctoral student as well as a full-time faculty member. I was not sure I could give it the time it deserved or even wanted to. However, I was afraid to pass up the opportunity to delve into the Ignatian principles with Cecile Walsh and Cathy Leahy. I am fortunate that I said yes.

We were asked to incorporate the Ignatian principles into a course we were teaching in the Spring semester. The decision to incorporate this project in the Senior Seminar class was an easy one. I believe nurses naturally manifest the Ignatian principles and I wanted the senior nursing students to express how they visualize themselves using these principles as nurses.

The Senior Seminar course description is as follows:

#### **Course Description:**

*This seminar course, to be taken in the last semester, focuses on the student's transition to entry-level practice. An inspection of personal transitions within the practice of nursing is examined. This capstone course allows the student to explore the educational transition of the program and to anticipate the professional transition into practice. Professional responsibilities of the holistic nurse are reviewed. Concepts emphasized relate to the nurse as an instrument of healing engaged in a transpersonal human caring process, self care, care of the environment and the global community.*

This description lends itself to addressing the Ignatian principles. I believe that, as the senior nursing student transitions into the work place, it is an important time to, as Father Kolvenbach states, transmit "the distinctive mark of Jesuit education" (1989). This transition period proved to be a perfect time to elicit student expressions of how one would emulate the principles in nursing practice. I hoped that leaving Xavier with this fresh in their minds would imprint the mark of Jesuit education.

I created two components to this project. First, I assigned the senior students to journal weekly on a designated Ignatian principle. They were to reflect on either how they incorporated the principle in clinical, a time they witnessed a nurse using the principle or believed they would use it when they joined the work force.

I graded this as a portion of the participation grade. I periodically assessed the journaling for completion and thoughtful reflection. The class met weekly on Wednesday afternoons. I found myself looking forward to this class as their reflections never ceased to amaze me.

The second component was a group presentation. I asked them to sign up in groups of 5-6 to present one of the Ignatian principles. They were asked to present an Ignatian principle that illustrates how the nurse in the workplace uses that principle. They were also challenged to express how this principle would guide their practice.

The following are a few reflections they shared in class and in their presentations:

While discussing "Finding God in All Things," Jackie told us that the following scripture guides her when she does not feel like giving it her all. Matthew 25:35-40: "For I was...ill and you cared for me....Amen, I say to you whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me. She said, "So, when I am tired and do not feel like giving my all, I think of this scripture and I ask myself is this how I would give care to the Lord?" One student asked if it was okay that she say, "Finding Good in All Things" instead of God because she was not sure she believed in God. When I told her that was fine and that I wanted her to feel comfortable in exploring her beliefs, she visibly relaxed. Another student stated, "Through prayer is where I find God. I can find Him in almost every situation." "Witnessing a birth," "Not everyone has the same spirituality. Respecting that as a nurse is most important." and "A nurse finds God when she works with the poor and suffering" are a few of the comments we heard in the presentation.

When discussing what Cura Personalis means to them, "Honesty with self and others," "Nurses caring for themselves to be able to provide holistic care to their patients," "Holism," "It is the ideal." were a few of their comments. During the presentation, one student expressed that "Balancing is what Cura Personalis is all about. This is not the same as juggling. When we juggle we are bound to drop something. That something may be very important...." Another stated, "Treating others as you would like them to treat you no longer works. Instead it should be 'treat people like **they** want to be treated'." While another commented that Cura Personalis means "involvement" to him. He believed in the importance of remembering that patients are involved in many activities that make up who they are outside of the hospital. They are not just an entity to be cared for as if they have nothing that concerns them outside of being a patient.

One student's reflection on Discernment was that seeing patients and friends making bad decisions with negative consequences has affected his decision-making. To another, Discernment is equivalent to "... the intuition that guides us". One student spoke of the vulnerability of patients making her emotional. She stated "Walking into a room seeing a patient making the decision to use an

incentive spirometer after I taught him the importance of it makes me emotional. It makes me so happy.” Still another expressed that Discernment meant making a difference by making the right decision.

The group who presented Magis expressed it with the mantra that “The Sky Is the Limit.” They presented quotes from famous achievers who have strived and reached their goals. The students were not at a loss for words when we discussed this principle. They stated that “using evidenced based practice,” “achieving goals,” “staying curious,” “challenging self,” and “surrounding yourself by people with the same values and expectations from life” were their visualization of what Magis means.

The Service of Faith and Promotion of Social Justice provided lively discussion. There were moments I was dismayed by what I thought were ‘hardened’ comments. However, I applauded their honesty. I was thrilled that it allowed me into their world so that I could impart a bit of mine. Few times when our students present their perceptions of reality, can we afford the time to delve into important issues such as this one? I feel blessed that I had the luxury to discuss this important issue with them. Comments such as “providing holistic service to patients,” “faith in self is important to growth,” “It’s important to see the patient as a person not defined by race or religion,” “promoting patient spirituality,” and “praying with patients is important to me” went a long way in restoring my faith. I believed this class was equipped to provide service of faith and to promote social justice, both on which a Jesuit education is based.

The discussion and presentation about Jesuit Pedagogy included comments such as the act of “learning independence teaches one to grow.” They expressed, “we are all teachers” and “teaching is what a nurse does.” I loved the proclamation, “teaching is an art” and Jesuit Pedagogy means “a love for learning.”

Last, the discussion about Men and Women for Others included comments about serving coworkers, being a community, and team building. They saw this principle as guiding them to be advocates for their patients. They presented that paying it forward means serving others. One student discussed the importance of being open-minded if you are a man or woman for others. It was with unanimous agreement that this principle was the definition of nursing. They believed that nursing is a vocation, a calling. “You do not choose it, it chooses you.” I had a student come to my office after class as she had something she wanted to add to the discussion of this principle and was too emotional to do so in class. She related a story about her uncle recently dying and her young cousin reminding his mother as she struggled to allow people to help her that it is important to be a receiver. This student emoted “The Jesuit ideal can be taken at face value as simply “doing” for others – being a servant – but isn’t it just as important to allow others to do for us? This is at times “doing”. Being a receiver can be just as valuable as being a giver.”

As I reflect on the experience of being in the Ignatian Mentoring program, I am reminded of what I teach my novice nursing students. I teach them that they “Stand on holy ground” when they are afforded the privilege to care for the sick, the vulnerable. Equally, I have come to believe that as an educator I too stand on holy ground, as it is a privilege to be a part of my students’ journeys. This experience has served to engrave that belief in my heart. I will forever remember my students’ willingness to expose their vulnerability each Wednesday in our classroom discussions. Likewise, their thoughtful reflections regarding how the Ignatian principles will guide their nursing practice have influenced my own practice and will not soon be forgotten.