

In the Fall of 2004, being a member of the Ignatian Mentoring Program, I was given the challenge of integrating the Ignatian mission into a course that I would teach in the Spring semester. I choose the course NURS 443, Community Nursing Practicum.

This course is unique to the university in that it is a "bridge" course. In the Department of

Nursing we refer to courses that segue a registered nurse (RN) without a college degree into master level courses as "bridge" courses. The typical student in this course has an RN license from a diploma nursing program or associate degree program. Often the student is middle aged as will be evident in the student profile that follows. I chose this group because the required course is offered before these students begin graduate work and therefore occurs early in their years at Xavier. I also chose this group because they are adult learners. Adult learners are always challenging and I believed that they may not have been exposed to the Ignatian mission.

As the syllabus states, Community Nursing Practicum focuses on health care management and various nursing roles within communities of increasing complexities. Nursing strategies aimed at disease prevention, promotion and restoration of health are applied to the management of identified community health problems. This course is a co-requisite with Nursing and Community Health (NURS 442). The course objectives involve using epidemiological methods to describe the state of health of a community; implementing problem solving processes to design resolutions for identified community health problems; enacting the role of a community health nurse in selected settings; and

analyzing interpersonal communication patterns with various groups. In reality, the student chooses an aggregate within the community. Through an assessment process, the student determines a health care need within the aggregate. After research, the student develops a plan of care and implements and evaluates its effects. An additional requirement - due to the professor's philosophy- involves a service component. The aggregate must be chosen by the student on the basis of having unmet needs, largely due to financial limitations. Evaluation methods include participation in seminar discussion, practicum logs, and a written paper discussing the project.

So how might one integrate Ignatian mission into a community nursing course? NURS 443 was an ideal course in which to integrate a mission driven teaching component. Each student was working with a group in the community and the course had a service theme. A profile of the students helps to illustrate their receptivity to this project. For the Fall semester, NURS 443 consisted of 10 adult learners. They were all female ranging in age from 40-55 years. Their years of nursing experience ranged from 13-31. The students' areas of nursing expertise included emergency room, surgery, ICU, research, cardiac, pediatric, and oncology nursing.

The purpose of the mission driven teaching component was to familiarize the graduate student with the Ignatian way and promote an understanding of Ignatian values.

Adult learning principles were utilized. The student was assigned to read "Cura What?" This booklet, written by Patricia Marik and Debra Mooney, is a graduate student's guide to understanding and living the Jesuit mission. When the student returned to seminar, each component of "Cura What?" was discussed. The components of the booklet cover cura personalis, discernment, finding God in all things, men and women for others, magis, and the service of faith and promotion of social justice. After self reflection, each student shared how she integrates principles of the Ignatian mission into her life and her proposal to implement the mission in her project. The last aspect of this assignment entailed writing a short paper discussing the implementation of the mission.

The seminar discussion was enlightening. Author Debra Mooney was able to join the class for observation and input. The scholarly papers also offered insightful comments by the students. The following quotes are excerpted from the written papers and seminar discussion .

- Integrating the Jesuit mission into my clinical experience and project was a natural fit. In my 30-years plus as a nurse I have implemented all of the Jesuit values outlined in "Cura What?" without even knowing they were Jesuit values.
- In Cura Personalis it is clear that Xavier is driven to shape its students as a whole individual, not merely intellectually. This can be a difficult piece to integrate into my own life. I have always been the major money maker, taking care of the children and other family members while going to school. I often lose sight of

taking care of my own self, body, soul and mind. However, after I made the decision to return to college, it has been extremely refreshing and supportive, that the Xavier staff respect and acknowledge my personal and work life. This environment allows graduate students to provide and care for either families as well as their education.

- Discernment: As a nurse who cares for premature infants, there are often several possible courses of action, all of which are potentially good and you must choose the best option for each individual infant as what is good for one infant many not be good for another.
- The community project practicum brought me much discernment. I could have made it easy on myself and chose a path that had already been taken, but in my heart, I felt pulled in a different direction. Deciding to start and implementing a support group for adolescents who self-injure was not an easy decision.
- As a nurse, I believe I have a gift for seeing good (God) in all things and in all people. I believe all persons have some good in them. I believe God is always present with us in our lives, I also believe all things happen for a reason. Seeing the good in all persons is really a gift; a gift of patience and understanding.
- I have always felt that challenged children, no matter the source of the difference, possess a gift from God. A child's gift from God to others may be simply that they enrich the lives of those with whom they come in contact thereby offering a glimpse of Christ known to be found in everyone.
- Finding God in all things: a smile from a patient, a compliment from the family, or a satisfied feeling when I know I have done my best at the end of a very long day, even if I did not get everything done.
- Men and women for others: I feel that nursing for me has always embodied this ideal and what nursing is all about: a mission and service to the community. I do not really think most individuals would continue to stay in this field just for a paycheck. The work is too difficult and demanding. There has to be something more spiritually and psychologically driving most individuals to stay in it.

- Striving for excellence, or magis, is the foundation of my clinical experience. It is truly refreshing to discover that there are many new things to learn...even after age 50. The feedback I have received in class and in my log entries has helped me to think more about what I'm doing and how to do it. As I have challenged myself to think about my project, I have revised my plan several times in an effort to "strive for more."
- I have been raised with many of the Jesuit values such as you must see God in all things and you cannot tolerate social injustice towards people. If you can bring about a change, do so in a non-violent way that brings God the Glory, I was raised in an activist household, every Sunday after church we would listen to Martin Luther King speeches and had to reflect on them. The Jesuit mission enforces many of these values to me and helps to bring everything in my life in perspective. We, as students, are here to learn at a scholarly level and also to gain understanding of how to serve the community better with our enhanced knowledge.

In conclusion, the assignment of integrating the Ignatian mission into a course was

very beneficial to the student and the professor. During discussion all students agreed that the assignment should be included as part of the course in future years. The assignment instigated a self reflection by the student that would not have occurred otherwise.

Ignatian Mentoring Program

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