

It has been a privilege to be a part of the AFMIX program. I am tremendously grateful for the experience and thankful to all who took the time to speak to our group, for the resources that were shared, for the time enjoyed in our small group and to our leaders. The resource ***“An Ignatian Journey: The Spiritual Exercises”*** is something I will always keep and refer to. I have learned so much about the Jesuits that has truly astounded and amazed me. To be honest, I am still processing all that I have learned and experienced during this time. I would say that AFMIX carried me through a time of “shaky faith” to a new time of hope, clarity and a sense of purpose and a returning to God in prayer and gratitude.

I am a Presbyterian but I have always been interested in the Daily Examen. The Spiritual Exercises were less known to me and seemed daunting at first. I was drawn in a very personal way to the idea of discernment on consolation and desolation and spent some time thinking and reading about this as we progressed.

At the beginning of AFMIX in one of the early sessions, we were confronted with the question – what do you want to do with your life? What is your most authentic desire? These are deep questions, especially when life’s twists and turns seem to become harder to navigate. To be able to say “I want and I choose what better leads to God’s deepening life in me” seemed like asking the impossible. Thinking about what is drawing me away from God (desolation) and what is bringing me closer to God (consolation) was an intense and very personal experience. I read an interesting article about “To Do Lists” and the suggestion of instead making two different lists: a **Stop-Doing List** (desolations) and a **To-Be List** (consolations) that gave me much food for thought.

I realized that I had been shutting God out and distancing myself from him. I spent some time considering the question “What would your answer be if Jesus said directly to you (as he does in the Gospel accounts) – ***What do you want me to do for you?***” I read again the Bible verse from 2 Corinthians 12:9 **“But he said to me “My Grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”** During the same week, I came across the poster displayed here with a quote by author Philip Yancey – **“Grace like water flows to the lowest part”**. I realized that talking to God in prayer about my “desolations” and “consolations” was what I needed to do and that answers would come. I understood that no matter how hopeless a situation seems, through conversation with God, it is possible to do something about it, even if it might only be in tiny increments. I also realized that it is a conscious decision we have to make every day to trust in God and that in doing so, we can live in freedom. Then, using our particular talents, we respond to God’s Grace in love. “Let go and let God” as one of our small group members said.

How do I convert this intensely personal experience to my work at Xavier? Again, it has to be a conscious decision every day upheld by prayer. In good interactions, in patience, in forgiveness, in leading by example, in determination and tenacity, in honesty, in being an encourager, in caring for the environment, in getting involved in the many mission opportunities that can be found through the different centers at Xavier and sharing them with people in my Division. Those are some of the things I hope to do. I am very grateful to have the opportunity to stand alongside the great people here and to be confident in the hope that, with God's help, I can do my part in ensuring the future mission and identity of Xavier University.

With many thanks for the opportunity.

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