

AFMIX Capstone

When I came to Xavier University 12 years ago, I was worried about how I would fit in. First, I am not Catholic. Additionally, I attended and have always been an advocate of public schools, I am an OSU and UC sports fan, and I had never taught nursing students before. Additionally, I was obtaining a DNP, not a Ph.D. To say I was somewhat nervous is an understatement. I do not know what I was most worried about but I did wonder if I was the only Jewish faculty member on campus because I knew I was the only one in nursing.

Thankfully, I received a pamphlet in orientation that featured and quoted a Jewish groundskeeper about working at Xavier University. I thought, well at least I am not the only Jew on campus. I spent my first years isolated in Cohen only getting to know nursing students and other nursing faculty. I was not familiar with the Jesuit School of thought or Ignatian values, but I received literature from the director about the Society of Jesus and the Ignatian values. Over the years at XU, I tried to incorporate these values into my classes but honestly did not give it a lot of thought. However, as time went on I began to realize how closely Ignatian values correlated with my Jewish upbringing and what I learned in my 12 years in Sunday school. The Ignatian values of men and women for others, finding God in all things, and working for the common good were familiar beliefs in Judaism. Although stated in different words, these values have always been reflected in Jewish values and provided a framework for ethical behavior. Besides correlating with Judaism, many of these values align perfectly with holistic nursing practice.

Xavier’s College of Nursing promotes holistic practice and has accreditation from the American Holistic Nurses Association (AHNA). As a public health nurse and nurse practitioner, I have always practiced holistically so was very happy that my holistic practice fit well at Xavier. I thought that at least I am in accord with cura personalis. In my courses, I cover material holistically with attention to the mind, body, and spirit. In addition, since I spent most of my first career as a public health nurse advocating and caring for vulnerable populations, I knew about service rooted in justice and love. Reflective journaling also comes naturally for most nurses. Although I have not done it consistently myself, I have included reflective journaling assignments in my classes.

One new thing I have incorporated in classes since taking the DITA class and being in AFMIX is asking students to examine their own biases, especially their implicit biases, and accept responsibility for their attitudes, actions, and communication with patients and families. I have struggled with incorporating some of the other values into my classes, however, *Finding God in all things, Magis, Discernment, and Solidarity & Kinship*. However, the more I have thought about these while in AFMIX, I realized I do encourage students to commit to the concept of Magis*.* I have high expectations of achievement and ask nursing students, both undergraduate and graduate, to go beyond what is normally expected, being generous with care, striving for excellence, while also being empathetic, especially with those patients belonging to vulnerable aggregates. I have also thought a lot about Xavier’s explanation of *Discernment*: “is practiced through prayer, reflection, and consultation with others and considering the full impact of actions from diverse angles.” I think this might be reflected in my focus on interprofessional collaboration that comes close to the definition on the XU website. Nurses need to approach patient problems from a variety of perspectives considering multiple social determinants of health. They must consult other disciplines to solve problems for patients. I may not ever talk to students about turning to God for difficult decisions, but I always stress a team approach to problem solving and assuring the best outcomes possible for each patient and family.

Participating in AFMIX has given me a better understanding of Xavier’s mission and identity, Ignatian principles and spirituality, and Jesuit values. I now consider AFMIX as a *mitzvah* for me. At a young age, I learned that mitzvah means a *good deed*. Jews often comment when somebody does something kind, “What a mitzvah.” As a child, I also learned to be charitable and help those in need, especially those living in poverty, and about tzedakah, or giving to the poor. At Sunday school, we collected money every week for UNICEF and were encouraged to perform acts of loving-kindness.

Another tradition and value in Judaism behavior is *tikkun olam* or repairing the world. ​​This is exactly what Xavier is promoting through Laudato Si', the “call to protect our common home for the wellbeing of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability.”

The other meaning of mitzvah I learned about in Religious School was “commandment.” This did not fit with my feelings about AFMIX however. Although I am not of the Orthodox Jewish faith, Orthodox Jews have a third meaning for mitzvah related to the root word “tzavta” which means “connection.” Therefore, every mitzvah is a way to be more closely connected with God. This meaning does fit with how I feel about AFMIX because AFMIX did make me reflect on my relationship with God. I have felt the AFMIX sessions and work we did was a way to strengthen or deepen my connection with the University and with God. Thus if a mitzvah is a connection and a path to get closer to God then AFMIX is truly a mitzvah and has helped me incorporate these values and principles into my life and my work as an educator. With this two-year experience, I hope I can bring an even stronger sense of these values into the classroom so my students leave Xavier as professional nurses internalizing *Cura personalis, Service rooted in justice and love*, Reflection, *Finding God in all things, Magis, Discernment, and Solidarity & Kinship.*

- *Kimberly P. Toole DNP, APRN, CNP*