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Kelly Lippincott Simmons

Xavier University

3800 Victory Parkway

Cincinnati, OH 45207

Dear St. Ignatius,

This is a letter of gratitude. It’s a letter thanking you for the legacy you left all of us who now work and study at Jesuit institutions. Thank you for allowing me to grow in my spirituality at my work place. Thank you for teaching all that are willing to learn the way to care for ourselves, each other, and our relationship with God.

I am the Director of Donor Relations at Xavier University. A university named for one of your fellow Jesuits, St. Francis Xavier. When asked what a Director of Donor Relations at Xavier does my answer always is making sure our donors are thanked properly for their donation(s) and shown the impact of their gift(s). Many times this involves having students, faculty, and staff writing thank you notes or sending reports to the donors about how the gift has impacted their job or their education. My hope is for this letter to serve that purpose to you. I want you to know what a lasting impact you have made on me and so many people at Jesuit institutions.

The past two years I participated in a program called AFMIX (Assuring the Future Mission and Identity at Xavier). Although there was a significant time commitment on my part, the gift of having this opportunity made it very much worth it. I would tell friends and family outside of Xavier, and they were always jealous of my ability to do a project like this “on company time.” What a gift to be able to work for an institution that values the ideals you left us that they would allow us to learn and pay us for it. Thank you!

In the program we were able to learn about you, your history, the spiritual exercises, and ways we will take what we’ve learned and experienced back into our jobs. Each semester was very meaningful to me. I will say the semester we were in small groups was very challenging for me personally but I did see the worth. It forced me to create a time and space for myself a few times a week to read and reflect and really take time for just my thoughts. That was a very hard thing for me to do. As a working mother of three busy children, time alone with my own thoughts is not something that happens very often. I came to see how healthy that time is for me and the importance that I continue it in some way. Since then I have joined bible studies at my church that help me continue this practice.

I am not a new employee to Xavier so the gifts of our Ignatian heritage that we always talk about here at Xavier were not new concepts. I appreciated diving deeper into those concepts, understanding where they came from, and really taking my own time to reflect on how they each relate to my work and my relationships and responsibilities outside of work.

I recently was approached from representatives of my church to think about becoming a ruling elder for our congregation. It was not going to be an easy decision for me to make. As I said I am busy. My first response could have easily been “no” had I been asked two years ago. That was not my decision though. After going through the AFMIX program I felt myself grow deeper in my spirituality and wanting to take more of a leadership role in my church. When the call came I felt like this was God hearing me (but after some thought it was more about me hearing Him!). I took the time to REFLECT. I wanted to be in SERVICE to the members of my church. I wanted MAGIS in my relationship with God and his people. It was time for me to take a leadership position to serve the church that had given me so much the past seven years.

Going forward in my job I see myself using the gifts in many different ways. CURA PERSONALIS is the first gift I think of with my position. I work alongside and for so many different people and different personalities. I want to care for who they are and their unique needs in the ways they need it.

I want to share the Ignatian gifts with others who may not be as familiar with them. I see this happening through events that we may host to alumni and donors. In fact we did just that at an event in February and it was very well received.

When talking with donors, alumni, students, staff and we talk about what it means to be a part of the Xavier family we all talk about the same things: there is a care for each person; there is a family atmosphere; there is a solidarity; there is a strong spirituality that guides our decisions; there is a higher sense of purpose. All of these feelings come from the gifts you left us over 400 years ago. Please know that the impact of your own journey is felt in lives all over the world still today. It is felt by people whose lives were changed because they were able to attend a Jesuit institution. It is felt by people whose lives became better because a Jesuit educated person advocated for them or invented something to help them or just cared a little more about them. It is felt by faculty and staff who get to work with other people in an institution that is passionate about taking care of each other.

Thank you for your life. Thank you for your journey. Thank you for leaving us such gifts. Thank you for giving me a way to grow in my spirituality and in my daily work. Thank you St. Ignatius!

With Love and Gratitude,

Kelly Lippincott Simmons