Devon James

Sustainability and the Mission Capstone

The Sustainability and the Mission program through the Center for Mission and Identity has been a great addition to my week the last several months. I initially signed up for the program because I knew it would allow me to get the Ignatian Educators of Distinction, but I gained so much more from the program. I had no idea how much effort Xavier puts into making campus a more sustainable place, and how much variety there is in the efforts. It’s as if everywhere you look on campus has some sort of sustainable initiative going on.

As a person of the Catholic faith, I particularly enjoyed the connections between faith and sustainability we’ve focused on by reading Laudato Si and Laudato Deum. These two documents, though different in tone, have helped me see the importance of caring for our common home through the lens of my faith. I’ve read summaries of Laudato Si before, but it was great to read the document for this program and have discussions about it with different folks in the program each week. I found our discussions particularly fruitful because I was able to see different people’s perspectives on the different topics we discussed. Some of the questions we were prompted to answer were challenging, but in a good way. I don’t think about my impact on the earth as much as I should, but the questions we were asked about our role in sustainability, the global impact of being sustainable, and the implications of failing to do our part got me thinking about how even though I’m one person, I can do some things to be more sustainable and help others to do the same as well.

Perhaps a favorite part of the program was all the field trips we got to take around campus to learn about the ways that campus tries to be sustainable. I enjoyed how we didn’t just learn about the ways the university is sustainable, but we got to see it in action by visiting the power plant, the green space, the small chapel, and other locations that are actively being sustainable on campus.

Finally, this program has taught me ways I can be more sustainable in my own life. Spending over an hour a week talking about sustainability forced me to think about it in my own life and not just as a broad subject that I’ve heard about sometimes. Because of this program, I’ve tried to make more of an effort to do what I can to be more sustainable. I use reusable containers for food when I can, I recycle, I pay attention to my water use and my energy use, and I have been reflecting on other ways I can be sustainable within my lifestyle, including the possibility of composting. This program has opened my eyes to the ways I could be more sustainable and what I can do to help care for our common home.