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Participating in the class, *Sustainability and the Mission*, over the 2024-2024 academic year, has been a very rewarding experience for me, both emotionally and spiritually. I have met new colleagues and connected with people across campus and I have learned about the incredible work Xavier University has done to earn status as a Laudato Si University. I am inspired by the tremendous thought, planning and hard work that has taken place at Xavier to make our campus both beautiful and sustainable. Because of this class, I understand the connection between spirituality and preserving the planet. This class has changed my mindset and actions, causing me to contribute daily to the conservation of our Earth. In addition, it has moved me to encourage sustainability efforts from others in my life, including my family and my students. I loved meeting so many people who have worked in sustainability efforts across campus and witnessing Xavier’s commitment to the planet. his knowledge has renewed my love for the University and its mission.

In “Laudato Si”, Pope Francis calls Earth a sister, he says: “…a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.” This analogy establishes that mother earth is a part of us, our family and one of God’s greatest creations. For that reason, we must protect it. As Catholics in particular, we are charged with conserving our planet. Practicing sustainability brings us closer with God. In this class, we discussed Pope Francis’ call for care for our common home. This call shows the deep connection between our spirituality and environmental lives. Through our on-campus field trips including to the Community Garden, the Legacy Labyrinth, the little chapel, exploring green roofs and more, we experienced Xavier University’s pledge to Laudato Si.

In class we often were tasked with thinking about nature around us, our favorite places and how they made us feel. When I am in nature, I am overtaken by God’s creations. The disconnect from work, screens and people allows me to embrace the natural world around me. In the rush of life, it is easy to ignore the silent beauty of growing grass, changing leaves or freshly fallen snow. This class reminded me to slow down, look around and cherish the beauty that surrounds us. In addition to valuing it, we must be active participants in the saving the planet and practicing sustainability. Thanks to this class, I think about my daily activities and ask myself if there is a better way to do them. I ask myself; am I contributing to waste? Can I reuse materials or reduce my carbon footprint?

Moving forward, I will take steps to embody the vision of “Laudato Si”. I commit to living simply, buying less and reusing. I commit to caring for creation, recycling, reducing energy usage and wasting less. I commit to being a voice for and helping the poor – those most affected by environmental degradation. I commit to fighting for environmental protections. I commit to walking and biking more and enjoying and renewing nature around me.

I am also inspired to work with students at Xavier to expand sustainability efforts in the dorms and across campus. I believe many college students would be excited and inspired to learn of Xavier University’s incredible efforts in sustainability and I would like to find a way for students to get involved and protect the world around them. I will also teach them about Laudato Si and Xavier’s commitment to sustainability. Thank you for a wonderful clas