Ignatian Leadership Seminar Capstone

Devon James

I thoroughly enjoyed the Seminars on Ignatian Leadership through the Center for Mission and Identity. Each week brought the opportunity for me to learn more about Ignatian principles as they relate to leadership. I took something away from just about every session we had. I’ve always loved Ignatian spirituality, but to put it in the context of leadership was valuable for me to understand it in a new context.

There were certain weeks I was happily surprised with how different departments or divisions incorporated Ignatian leadership principles. I was happy to hear Becky Cull talk about the importance of reflection in her work. She found it helpful to understand the mission of the university when making decisions in her job and thinking deeper about the impact of the decisions she makes rather than what she would do in her job in corporate law. I was drawn to Ivy Banks presentation on humble leadership and how she approaches her work in DEI. I imagine it can be hard to be humble in these times of turbulency around DEI work. She talked about thinking of yourself less and having a modest view of oneself and being willing to submit to God and others. That’s an important aspect of leadership.

Steve Yandell’s presentation on the Gifts of Our Ignatian Heritage was a great reminder of what’s important to us as a Jesuit institution. I especially appreciated how he talked about the importance of composition of place and using our senses to enter a biblical scene. I always love Imaginative Prayer, so hearing it reinforced with him was great. The session Joe led on the First Principle and Foundation was impactful for me as well. I am currently going through the Spiritual Exercises, and it brought me back to the beginning of the retreat and reminded me of the importance of it. I didn’t know that Quo Vadis means where are you going? I was struck by that, especially knowing the location of the statue on campus.

When Fr. Jim McCann came in to talk about Ignatian discernment, I was reminded of my love for it. I often share about the principles of Ignatian discernment with my students, and it was a good refresher on the deeper meaning of discernment for Ignatius. I also appreciated the different way to do an examen given by Laura Ruwe. I had never thought of using art to make an examen prayer. But her reminder that everyone does the Examen in different ways was great. I also redownloaded the Reimagining the Examen app to use it in my own prayer life when I am feeling drawn to do the Examen.

When Jeff Coleman came to speak about how he uses the Mission and Ignatian Belonging in meetings, I was surprised to see the ways he does that. He really tries to incorporate the mission into Risk Management and that’s a great place to do it. I especially liked how he made sure to include everyone in the process of including the mission in their meetings by having everyone bring something that relates to Ignatian Belonging to the meetings. It got me thinking about ways I can incorporate the mission and Ignatian Belonging into my meetings I have during my week.

Finally, I really enjoyed when Ivy came back last week to talk about Ignatian Belonging and she shared that “the power is in the work, not the words.” We can talk about being social justice minded all the live long day, but if we aren’t acting on those words, the words are empty. Words are important, but they need to be backed up with action. I also appreciated how she said that DEI work is for everyone, not just her division. Everyone is called to do the work to make sure folks feel like they belong here at Xavier and in the world.

These last several weeks of the seminar have been a great part of my week. I have enjoyed getting to dive deeper into Ignatian leadership and how that can impact my own leadership here on campus. I am grateful for everything I’ve learned, and I hope to begin implementing what I’ve taken away from the weeks into my work at the University.