

Nursing

Integrating Jesuit Values in an Accelerated Bachelors of Nursing Clinical Course:

Creating space to explore that which is Profoundly Human

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The nursing practice and caring for humans is one that marries beautifully with Jesuit values. My years of practicing and training with the talented women and men who are the backbone of our healthcare system have been time spent with the most caring, team oriented, persons continuously challenging themselves to learn more and give more. The hospital gown is the great leveler...as professionals, nurses never care about your politics or profession, religious background or social standing ...we see a person and act diligently to provide care. We help the laboring mother deliver her baby, support the mentally ill, assist with the operation to remove the tumor, provide life-saving medications and measures to restart a heart, educate the diabetic to regain their health, hold the hand of the dying... It is a profession that is transformative intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Nurses are present with human beings at all the important milestones of life and death and the seemingly mundane times of life as well...but present to assist, educate, help and heal. The depth and richness of the human experience is part of our everyday work. As a nurse educator, I feel a sense of responsibility and feel the privilege of having a hand in preparing our next generation of nurses for this transformational profession at a time of critical crossroads in health care. I feel strongly that Jesuit values will provide a scaffold for our nursing students and new nurses to navigate these often profoundly human experiences as well as the challenges in health care.

Challenge:

How to integrate Jesuit Values and Ignatian principles in an accelerated program that moves so quickly it is very challenging to think of much else other than the next task to complete? How do I help prepare students for the emotional, spiritual, moral aspect of nursing?

The Accelerated BSN is a rigorous program to complete a Bachelor's of Nursing in 16 months. The program is hybrid...online didactic and hybrid practicum of online assignments and in-person clinical hours with an adjunct nursing instructor for 12- hour clinicals. This challenging program moves so quickly by design, and presents its own challenges for students. Students are second degree students, and therefore have a myriad of demands with more responsibilities outside of the classroom. These students do not benefit by attending Manresa or other campus activities and are off site from XU's main campus. ABSN is often the first exposure to Ignatian pedagogy and Jesuit education.

The nursing profession as a whole is a pursuit that encompasses the whole person. Physically demanding with the standing, lifting, bending and supporting for often 12- hour plus shifts. Emotionally

demanding dealing with patients and their families often facing mortality who are dealing with loss, grief, frustration, and fear. Intellectually challenging as our patient populations have become increasingly more complex with the comorbidities and older. Nurses need a full knowledge base of advances in all modalities that change daily. The profession can be spiritually taxing with the nature of working with patients facing mortality. The moral and ethical decisions arising from health care disparities can weigh on the soul. The crisis of moral injury of health care workers was only accelerated with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic leading to a mass exodus of health care providers. Chronic understaffing is the result adding more work for a less experienced work force. It is perhaps the most critical time in the history of the profession.

It is more important now than ever to prepare our next generation of nurses to be prepared for this climate from a body, mind, emotion and spirit perspective. Offering the Jesuit lens from which to examine their clinical experience allows for students to reflect, examine, process, plan and grow through these often- demanding days.

Background:

In preparation for this year long program, I met regularly with my mentor, Ashley Varol. Her insights and guidance were valuable as I worked on integrating Ignatian pedagogy in my online classroom. I drew from my own undergraduate experience as a Xavier student and emersion in Ignatian pedagogy as a student. I consulted the Jesuitresources.org, Dr. Deborah Mooney's resources available through Xavier's Office of Mission and Identity and found Ronald Modra's work on Ignatian Humanism inspiring to learn from the varied Jesuit thinkers.

Opportunity:

I chose to integrate the Ignatian pedagogy further into my Nursing 353 and 355 practicum courses using an existing reflection journal assignment but adding the lens of Jesuit values and Ignatian principles specifically. Previous terms of post clinical reflection journals were, at times, of greater depth but more often a laundry list of tasks completed throughout the day and experience of a 12- hour clinical shift. An opportunity for more often missed. Adding this lens to the assignment could create the space to explore the Jesuit values and offer the students the opportunity to have a richer clinical experience, an opportunity to process the clinical experience holistically and find growth intellectually, morally and spiritually. A reflection to slow down to process and integrate the moments of the profound human experiences they witness and participate in during their 12- hour clinical days.

The weekly assignment asks students to use a Jesuit Value as a lens for their reflection on their day. Those include:

Following each clinical experience, complete a clinical journal relating your clinical experience using the lens of one of the following Jesuit values:

- ***Cura Personalis***. Jesuit education emphasizes the view that each person is a unique creation of God. *Cura Personalis* (meaning 'care for the whole self' in Latin) is demonstrated by personal attention in the classroom, a deep respect for diversity and difference, and an emphasis on holistic care for the mind, body, and spirit.

- **Discernment.** Discernment encourages students to be open to God’s spirit as they make decisions and take actions that contribute to the greater good. Discernment is practiced through prayer, reflection, consultation with others, and considering the full impact of actions from diverse angles.
- **Finding God in all things.** A Jesuit education is one grounded in the presence of God and encompasses imagination, emotion, and intellect. The Jesuit vision encourages students to seek the divine in all things—in all peoples and cultures, in all areas of study and learning, and every human experience.
- **Magis.** A commitment to the concept of *Magis* (Latin for ‘more’) is a hallmark of Jesuit education. It challenges students to go beyond what is expected, interacting with the world with generosity, excellence, and empathy. *Magis* is modeled by personal accountability and high expectations of achievement.
- **Service rooted in justice and love.** Jesuit education cultivates critical awareness of social and personal evil, but points out that God’s love is more powerful. This value is illustrated through community service programs, service learning semesters, immersion experiences, and various volunteer opportunities for students.
- **Solidarity and kinship.** Students work together for the greater good. They develop relationships with their surrounding communities and share their talents and skills to help and serve others. This value is practiced through community-engaged learning, where students work with community members to come up with innovative solutions.

Student Response:

“...the value that impacted me the most was treat the patient as a whole....as nurses we are so programed to treat the diagnosis...I made an effort to ask the patient how they are feeling/doing...especially important when a patient may be alone...”

“...‘seeing God in all things’. The verse ‘work as though you are working for God and not for man’...I repeat to myself when I had to do something I wasn’t thrilled about....it has new meaning to me that I will continue to carry with me as I move on in my educational/nursing journey.”

“...*Cura Personalis* resonated deeply with me. It reminded me of the importance of seeing beyond a patient’s diagnosis or medical condition and acknowledge their humanity, individuality and unique needs.”

“...Ignatian values have not only influenced my clinical experiences but have also shaped my nursing philosophy. They have helped me better understand the privilege and responsibility of caring for others.””

“...the lens of Jesuit/Ignatian values ...went through my day with an added element of introspection that helped me cement some of the lessons and knowledge gained from each day...helped me realize that clinicals are not just to learn skills, but also learn how we need an should act as professional nurses...”

“...there are times when Service Rooted in Justice and Love can be overwhelming. When you have the opportunity to pour over notes and charts and see the economic disparities and the results of them on patients, it can feel so hopeless and scary. I will not change the world and how unfair it is but I can change myself and be fair to people as to not be part of the injustice each person faces in a different way.”

“...Jesuit value that meant the most to me was solidarity and kinship...everyone that worked on the unit, including all of the students, nurses and aids worked together to get the best outcomes for our patients.”

“...emphasis on discernment elevated my decision-making skills, which will have an impact in my practice as a nurse.”

“...The Ignatian value that meant the most to me was *magis*... by looking for things that can help others, whether big or small and working to figure out how to make it happen. It is what I believe can differentiate an average nurse from a great nurse...”

“practiced solidarity and kinship today when practicing patient care alongside the PCT assigned to my side. She was clearly struggling ...by working together we helped serve the “community” (patients) in order to serve them...”

“... I was able to employ the Jesuit value of *cura personalis* as I sat and held the hand of a patient who was experiencing hallucinations and obvious fear. In that moment, I felt compelled to sit with her, to allow her to grasp my hand as tightly as she needed, and to speak calming affirmations over her. It was truly an experience I will not soon forget.”

“I practiced *Cura personalis*...the patient I cared for was scared... I touched her leg and told her it was okay and that she was safe here to help provide her some comfort.”

“When you practice self-care during a shift you are able to give better nursing care to patients. I observed the staff practicing self-care as well...each nurse was able to take a lunch break during their shifts and they worked together that each of them was able to do so.”

Clinical Faculty Response:

“To be candid, I have learned as much or more about Jesuit Values from my students as I have in my own (MSN) courses. The reflection journal assignment introduced me to the language and core values that I now see as a student myself. I enjoyed reading the assignments and clinical journals as students created meaningful relationships between bedside care and the Jesuit Values. The feedback I received from students was that it brought more meaning to their clinical experience.”

“I would say that I am only familiar with the Jesuit Values in the sense that each value can be related to living a life a service, not specifically in the religious sense. I have found that introducing these values into the reflection journal has been somewhat challenging. Many students are not necessarily familiar with the values as they are written and have difficulty integrating them into the assignment meaningfully... I have had to take time to research each value and attempt to get the students to understand how these values relate to what they are doing clinically as well as how to ensure that they are using the values... Further instruction on the values is needed in my opinion...”

Outcome:

In conclusion, the vast majority of students reported that the personal application of the Jesuit values added an awareness and depth to their experience. Many stated it was something that would be helpful in their future practice and plan to continue to reflect with this lens as a practicing nurse. The clinical faculty response was more mixed. One challenge is that our adjunct instructors do not participate in Manresa or other opportunities to cultivate an understanding of Xavier's Jesuit identity. Many nurses are already integrating Ignatian principles in their practice as those called to be nurses are persons who are for and with others but nature, but are not using the language as such. As a course lead, I can provide further education and resources for interested adjunct faculty to improve their comfort level with the material.

I found this process to be meaningful. Reading the students' journals was inspiring to see how they found God in all things, advocated for those with disparity, practiced discernment, were elevated all by the generosity of *magis*, and were able to look at those as a whole- beings through *cura personalis*. I will continue to offer this for upcoming cohorts, but will provide even more instruction with regard to language. I am excited for the difference they will make in the lives of their patients and communities. Nursing is truly one of the few professions where we show up and are present to all that is profoundly human. It is in the embracing of this humanity that we transcend and do God's work.

References:

Modras, R. (2004). *Ignatian Humanism A Dynamic Spirituality for the 21st Century*. Loyal Press.

