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## Ignatian Intent: Using Ignatian Pedagogy for Sustainability in the Sociology Classroom

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### Cover Page Footnote

I wish to thank Dr. Kathleen Smythe and Dr. Jay Lighter for the opportunity to discover Ignatian Pedagogy for Sustainability; and those in the AJCU network for all they do to advance discussion and action on sustainability initiatives.

## Ignatian Intent: Using Ignatian Pedagogy for Sustainability in the Sociology Classroom



Ignatian Pedagogy  
for Sustainability

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### Abstract

In the sociology classroom, students expressed thoughts of denial of the importance of a number of social issues, including climate change. During this time, I was involved in two initiatives which were collaborative efforts to weave Ignatian pedagogy with sustainability education. First, at Canisius College, we developed a Sustainability Initiative to embrace a comprehensive approach to environmental sustainability in academics, community and campus culture. Second, I was invited to become involved with the AJCU Ecology Educators group working on the Ignatian Pedagogy for Sustainability. Through the application of the Ignatian Pedagogy for Sustainability tool kit, I took the opportunity to address the climate crisis and supporting our student's ability to engage with the at times overwhelming nature of our environmental crisis. This took place through adjusting my pedagogy to connect to themes of Ignatian Pedagogy for Sustainability through different classroom opportunities.

I am writing from my perspective as member of the AJCU Ecology Educators and a Professor of Sociology at Canisius College, where I have the privilege of teaching courses that support our sociology and environmental studies curriculum. I also serve as program director for environmental studies, and have been active in the Canisius College Sustainability Initiative where colleagues and I work towards implementing sustainability through community, curriculum, and campus culture.

In this praxis piece, I take the opportunity to reflect on a series of observations noted in sociology classroom experiences. These experiences provide me the opportunity to consider how to integrate classroom teaching more intentionally within the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm; and specifically, in this article, Ignatian Pedagogy for Sustainability.<sup>1</sup>

It was Fall 2017. While writing my yearly self-evaluation of teaching, scholarship, and service, I reviewed my course evaluations from the previous semester (Spring 2017). I came across a comment on the open qualitative response section and I read, "Dr. Robinson talks about climate change as

if it's real." What better time to self-reflect on that sentiment, on what happened in this course, and what to do moving forward, than in my own self-reflection of the previous year.

Although I noticed tepid resistance to some of the issues I discuss in my Environment and Society class, in my years of teaching, I had not had an explicit comment on my evaluations of that nature. While we have always engaged in debate and conversation over issues in the sociology classroom, since 2015, colleagues and I have been discussing the changing nature of the questions and comments from students alluding to the validity of social science. This has been evident in foundational courses such as Introduction to Sociology and Social Problems, and other courses especially over elective topics of race, gender, sexuality, and environment, such as Race and Ethnicity and Environment and Society.

As faculty at a Jesuit institution, tools of our mission such as the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP) offer an opportunity to reflect on, act on, and experience these moments with our students. It forces a deeper understanding of the roles of teacher and student. And while teaching is a

reflexive process always, embedding the IPP allows me to become the student, sharing a reflexive experience in the classroom. Developed by Jesuit faculty participating in an Ecological Educators Working Group, led by Drs. Kathleen Smythe (Xavier University) and Jay Leighter (Creighton University), the document *Ignatian Pedagogy for Sustainability (IPS): Vision and Mission for Themes*, provides guideposts for deepening these connections between classroom and everyday

experiences. Moving deeper into the IPP, IPS allows us to develop a stronger sense of mission as well as question the political, social, and economic realities that shape our ideals and our vision over the environment. The most recent volume of *Jesuit Higher Education*, Volume 8:1, includes the primary document describing this approach as well as praxis articles from other members of the AJCU Ecology Educators group.<sup>2</sup> The table below provides a summary of these themes.

**Table 1.** Ignatian Pedagogy for Sustainability Themes<sup>3</sup>

<p><b>Theme 1 (CONTEXT). Truth, honesty, and humility</b>  <i>Being honest with ourselves and our students and being co-learners with everyone; assuming a position of humility in the face of planetary challenges that remind us there are no simple answers.</i></p>
<p><b>Theme 2 (EXPERIENCE). Multiple modes of knowing (scientific, embodied, spiritual, cultural, artistic, humanistic, experiential)</b>  <i>Integrating multiple modes of knowing ensures (as do the above) that we and our students are engaged heart, soul, and body.</i></p>
<p><b>Theme 3 (REFLECTION). Time, concentration, and imagination</b>  <i>Taking time for prayer, reflection, meditation, self- and other-compassion, for focusing on what really matters, and for envisioning and then moving into the lives we want to live; removing the barriers in everyday life that limit focus on important concerns.</i></p>
<p><b>Theme 4 (ACTION). Community, service, obligations</b>  <i>In many ways, the above will be fully realized only in service to communities to which we feel a sense of belonging and obligation and to which we devote some of our energy and time for common goals and purposes. These can be families, neighborhoods, cities, religious communities, political parties, nonprofit organizations, schools, universities, etc. This assumes a long-term obligation to others regardless of uncertainty.</i></p>
<p><b>Theme 5 (EVALUATION). Integrity with nature</b>  <i>Recognizing and acting upon the scientific and spiritual truths of our interdependence on the natural world around us; attentive to the lessons we receive when we are reflective about being part of and interacting in nature.</i></p>

I have had the pleasure to engage with a group of scholars working with intention to create spaces for the expression of sustainability reflections in their academic courses. As Jesuit educators we can offer spaces to democratize discussion specifically by engaging the tools of the IPP.<sup>4</sup> Experience, reflection, and action are guideposts which allow for a deeper dive into the connections with our common home and the efforts of sustainability to protect it. Students at our institutions are uniquely poised to engage in this dialogue and the potential of a transformative experience.

humanity in its place to the wonder of nature. In the sociological classroom, we address these issues from the sociological perspective. A key component of this perspective—the sociological imagination—requires that we understand the relationship between our individual realities and social structure. Pope Francis addresses this directly as he proclaims this relationship in *Laudato Si'* by asking us to embrace a systemic approach to understanding our connection to the ecology of the social and natural worlds.<sup>5</sup> He calls on us to understand the intimate connection between all spheres of life. His critique of anthropocentrism is key to moving towards a new relationship with the natural world. As environmental sociologists have

Thinking about issues in this way offers a sense of freedom, an honest difference with pride of

pointed out since the 1970s, that material and natural worlds collide over several irreconcilable differences: materialism, consumption, individualism, and exploitation, all under the anthropocentric worldview that the natural environment should and does feed these traits.

The IPS calls on us to offer dialogue about the full realization of our role on and connection to this planet. As a basic definition, ecology means “relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings.”<sup>6</sup> Considering this, the ecological crisis infers to a crisis of relational connections. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis writes, “when media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously. In this context, the great sages of the past run the risk of going unheard amid the noise and distractions of an information overload.”<sup>7</sup> Contextually, this constant overload of information and reliance on social media instead of actualized human relationships contributes to the crisis of connection. This can be seen in the relationships we have with ourselves, with one another through the social structure, and with the natural world.

Sociology holds the relationship of the individual and society in tension. How does social structure shape our realities? And what then is the role of the individual? *Laudato Si'* asks us to consider this as we reconsider sources of power and conflict in our society today. Sociology responds to this by engaging in research traditions that challenge the status quo and place the power in the hands of the people impacted most by forces of social change. Our focus on the rigor of social science establishes an evidence base for patterns of social realities often based in injustice, conflict, and marginalization. The experience in the sociological classroom is one that opens students to these connections. As faculty, our role is to provide a space for the illumination of such connections while inspiring experience, reflection, and action.

## Science Under Siege

Cultural attacks over science have increased since 2015. International mobilization as public protest on April 22, 2017 represented a public response to a visible attack on the validity and value of science.<sup>8</sup> Coined “The March for Science”, this protest was organized specifically to take back the public narrative over the importance of scientific knowledge, especially knowledge that informs policy decisions. And often the responsibility of knowledge that informs policy is created under the umbrella of social sciences disciplines.

As I write this I realize that all policy decisions *should* be informed by scientific knowledge, or at least the consult of such available information. Since the announced candidacy of Donald Trump in the Republican primary race of 2015, there has been a deliberate attempt to delegitimize and disengage the public from the importance of science as a form of truth.<sup>9</sup> Tweets such as evidenced below help shape the public consciousness over the importance of scientific knowledge and debate over issues such as climate change.<sup>10</sup>



Climate Change Tweets

With the very nature of science questioned, the March on Science began to address this, but primarily through the restoration of funding to the physical sciences and their research agendas.<sup>11</sup> Arguably, the social sciences are under siege from a different type of attack. The very nature of “‘fact as opinion as alternative fact’” dialogue leaves the presentation of such information a very real challenge.<sup>12</sup>

Why? We can trace the same debate back to the development of positivism with Auguste Comte, the founding father of sociology, and the focus on rigor and empirical evidence to claim law-like generalizations of human behavior. Sociology emerged as a field of study in response to forms of inquiry which relied on the study of math, physics, chemistry, or biology; *or* explanations of human behavior drawn from philosophical and mystical religious trajectories. First developed as “‘social physics,’” Comte argued for a positivistic approach to gathering and analysis of social behavior in response to two paths of recognized knowledge: mysticism and natural science. Eventually, coining this process of investigation *sociology*, Comte argued for five categories of empirical evidence-based science: mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, and sociology. Since this time, scientific inquiry has largely been separated into two trajectories, the natural and social sciences. Both based on the rigor of the scientific method, social sciences have faced criticism of method and rigor of validity and reliability. Arguably, this has served as an opening for some seeking to delegitimize evidence gathered in these traditions as pseudoscience or more recently “‘fake news,’” although the latter has been used to describe more than just scientific evidence.<sup>13</sup>

### **Opportunity in the Sociology Classroom**

This praxis reflection is an effort to develop a connection with course content through providing experience to open debate on the seriousness of environmental issues and precious connection we can have with nature. In response to these observations in sociology classes, especially the palpable denials of climate change in SOC 234: Environment and Society, I introduced three pedagogical content changes. I admit a shortcoming. I did not consider the extent to

which climate denial sentiments existed in the classroom. While students in this course are likely to be sociology, environmental studies, or environmental science majors, others take the class for the college CORE, where in doing so they would receive Field 5, Social Science credit. In a class of 35 students, approximately 30 were in related majors, leaving 5 students who were taking the class for various reasons, including as a free elective, CORE, general interest, a minor in related field, or simply just that the class worked out for the timing of their course schedule. Of course, this is not to say that students who are not majors would hold differing beliefs. Because of the anonymity associated with course evaluations, there is no direct way to know which students submitted those evaluations; this is not the focus of this particular paper nor is that the point to recognizing such a set of comments. More broadly, this is a way to address the context in which we teach sociology, especially when it intersects with principles based in traditional scientific investigation.

First, I decided to reevaluate the way evidence is introduced in the course. I returned to information taught in introductory and methods classes. I provided lecture and discussion points on the scientific method, the development of the sociological perspective, including methodological traditions in sociology. I provided more on the debate of evidence and how this comes to the surface in the classroom, discussing areas such as reliability and validity. While I always include lecture and discussion on these topics, it is however notable that a defense of the research method was not as necessary in the past as it has been recently.

An explicit focus in the classroom on methodological rigor addresses some concerns, but only goes so far. The climate change debate in the classroom is one area that despite the evidence affirming its reality, has been hotly debated for nearly three decades. Environmental problems fall into a particular type of politicization, as do many others. When debates over socially constructed realities are responded to with doubt of their existence, it is not unusual that the doubt stems from political filters.

For example, in my social movements class that same semester, one evaluation comment said: “Why do Black Lives Matter and not all lives?” Though we had discussed this in class from many perspectives, this still came forward as an item some felt notable enough to write on a course evaluation. Similarly, in another comment, a student noted the abortion debate by stating: “I don’t know why we are discussing abortion in class. I am pro-life and even though I know Dr. Robinson will listen to my ideas, there is no way I am comfortable talking about this in class.” Again, in both instances, these were components of a social movements class taught within broader topics of the history and debates of Civil Rights and reproductive rights.

Second, I provided opportunity for quiet reflection in class. Sometimes this occurred at the beginning of class—sometimes at the end and sometimes in the middle—before we shifted to a different topic or activity. I would usually lead the reflection with a poem or a quote, but at times it was simply a quiet few minutes to allow students to settle and recognize the space they were in. Additionally, this semester in particular, was important because a core group of faculty and students interested in sustainability (Canisius College Sustainability Initiative) were developing plans to open a community garden near campus. Reflections included prompted questions about the garden. I provided updates to students, which included their visions of the space and how they see the community and campus connected through the garden development process.

Third, I changed a late semester activity to be more intentional around the reflection happening throughout the semester. In the last weeks of the spring semester, I would take students on a nature walk across from our classroom in the historic Forest Lawn Cemetery. Some semesters, I would have them write broadly about what they noticed; other times, I would simply have them sit and reflect. This semester, I combined the experience with a space for walking and seated reflection, followed by a write up of their experience. This was prompted by three intentionally broad questions:

1. *What do you see?*
2. *What looks new?*
3. *Can you notice a relationship between nature and the built environment; nature and the social environment?*

With these questions, my intent was to settle their minds away from the heaviness of the semester’s topics or provable points, but instead to elicit a series of responses on a brief moment in nature. What can one see when one’s eyes are given the opportunity to see? Had the garden been ready, we would have included an experience there in this reflection as well. Responses were coded by key words associated in the five themes of the IPS. The results are integrated in the following discussion, supported by student quotes from their observational reflections.

### **Discussion**

Having recently completed the Ignatian Colleagues Program (ICP), Cohort 7, I was more aware of how to implicitly and explicitly build pillars of Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP) into the classroom. And while I was doing this within my personal teaching philosophy, ICP provided me with the confidence and ability to see the specific intentionality in course development and teaching. In this rethinking of presentation topics, discussions of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm become wedded with the Ignatian Pedagogy for Sustainability in reflection, discernment, and action over the experience of a quiet afternoon in nature.

On the topic of theme 1, context of truth and humility, students reflected on their position in the relationship of what they saw at the cemetery. Many shared that they simply had not taken the time to ever truly experience the space that encompasses the land directly across from the college campus. As one student noted:

I personally had never actually been inside Forest Lawn so it was all new for me. I have only observed it from my drive down Main Street or when I am walking between classes. It was nice to finally see more of it considering I have always noticed it but never been inside. (Student 2) <sup>14</sup>

Truth and humility were also apparent in responses which referred to the humbleness of being within the magic of nature and the wonder of wildlife that exists:

In Forest Lawn, I mostly see gravestones but among them is the beautiful wildlife that is immersed into Forest Lawn. There are many bird species that live within Forest Lawn and it is always amazing to see the different species that we can come across. I even saw a rare Belted Kingfisher while we were there. All the different trees and Scajaquada Creek are quite a site. It is sad however to see all of the trash and pollution that is in the creek. (Student 5)

And while connected of course to the other eco-pedagogical themes, students seem to reflect on the vastness of the space and the history encompassed with it, as one student writes:

The trees that surround are old, the landscape is generally old, and the way that the entire grounds are formed is old, from where the grass ends to the hilly land that the headstones sit upon. Its old and new meshing together. In terms of the social environment, when you are in the cemetery itself, you feel very cut off from society even though you are in the middle of the city because it is a large open space of land and headstones. No cars, no people, living that is, and really no sounds other than the small waterfalls and the songs that play from the chapel. (Student 7)

One student even reflected on the nature of death and the idea that we must pay to be laid to rest with nature:

I think the creek is a perfect example of nature-built environment. It is man-made, but it holds life in its water. I think it's interesting that we have to pay to be buried back to the Earth. This beautiful park is housing the very wealthy, but shouldn't all human life be honored with a beautiful park? (Student 1)

While acknowledging the overwhelming nature of these issues, as faculty, I hold the desire for our students to know they are not alone in reflecting on, understanding, or solving this crisis. This crisis is not theirs to solve—we are in this together and they need to be reminded of that. Students reflected on the vastness of the issue, which is only possible once they stop to consider it. It is easy to “not see.” They expressed awe at the natural green space just across the street from the campus and when faced with the truth they recognize it is not only up to them, but in community we can address these issues together.

On the topic of theme 2, experience, sociology derives its evidence base from empirical observation, essentially what we see. Students used this exercise to embed their observations into experiential knowledge. In this case, as one student reflects “buds on the trees, the grass is beginning to grow, the air is warmer than days ago. It feels alive and quiet compared to outside Forest Lawn.” The student is experiencing change in the transformation of seasons and bearing witness to this. Another recalled a number of moments that seemed to surprise them, writing:

I've never seen this sphinx tomb before the added new ducks...introduced or natural migration? work on the creek—will there be a path to Delaware park? Office Lehner's grave, right by the giant angel statue many others recreating—roller blades, bikes, at ease with deaths no obvious mourners—is that a thing of the past? the work on mirror lake finally seems to be done and it's getting lots of visits, there is a lot of groundwork happening, but no new graves being dug, new stone walkway through mausoleums. (Student 11)

This student's comments also begin to pose questions for theme 3, focusing on reflection. Experience should lead to the desire to connect to a give oneself a space for reflection. However, many times the ability to engage in true reflection is blocked by the lack of focus and at times, ability to truly concentrate or even imagine the space to do so. Especially in a cultural space where we are distracted and moving through daily life at a pace that disallows time for true mindfulness. Our role



as educators has become in part to provide strategies that integrate these aspects into the classroom experience. Providing opportunity for meditation and discernment supports a self-care regimen that is essential to the care of the whole person.

Understanding the role of experience coupled with a humanistic approach to studying the world is evident in their responses. Building upon their experience in a sociology classroom and extending to an experience in nature draws on the importance of our interdisciplinary ways of knowing that is at the core of our role as teachers and practitioners.

On the topic of theme 3, reflection, making time for concentration and imagination, students reflected on the relationship between nature and human society and the tension that continues to exist, bearing a more complete understanding of each. As one student writes,

The social environment in this space is death. It's a bit odd that we have an easier time accepting nature in this setting. Here, it is considered nice to have birds and deer, while that in the center of the city would be considered just bizarre and unsettling. I imagine it impedes the deer a bit to have to constantly hop the plethora of graves, but the herd seems to be thriving. It's a little unsettling that the greenspace in the middle of the city is full of dead people, but since it's the one greenspace that is socially acceptable to have, it makes sense and we're lucky that such a massive cemetery is in this city. Seeing natural life thrive in a graveyard makes it a much more comforting place to visit. Instead of seeming bleak and obsolete, a visit to Forest Lawn breathes connectivity. (Student 11)

Students also spoke of surprise of different elements they noticed in nature. Their sentiments relate to the reality that nature can thrive despite human obstacles. For example, litter was visible on the ground and in the streams, yet the trees and streams create their own map for wandering and exploration.

I also noted the shallow water that ran under the bridge. The water had some garbage in it but it also housed fish which I was not expecting, I did not think fish would thrive in the water there. (Student 2)

There was a stream and trees and the paths seemed to be endless, one would just lead to another and so on. It seemed very easy to get lost in there. (Student 3)

The winding trails that never end is a great way to escape the real world for a moment. (Student 3)

The focused, intentional time allowed for reflection is rare in today's culture. Students came to appreciate the use of poetry, quiet reflection, and the *pause* that it brings to the quickness of their thoughts and minds. The walk itself is a form of mindful meditation. This offers an opportunity to connect with one another and to the physical space surrounding them. The end of one student's quote summarizes this well: "a visit to Forest Lawn breathes connectivity."

On the topic of theme 4, action through community and service, the availability to see change as possible is a cornerstone to Ignatian spiritual practices. Without the opportunity to see spaces for potential action for social change, it is nearly impossible to engage in practice for that action to occur. Within this theme, students recognize their potential agency in social changes processes, as well as the actions visibly carried out by other entities. Students recognized these as restoration efforts undertaken in the grounds and along the creek watershed.

They are doing a lot for the land around the creek and hopefully it will help the health of the creek. There was a new sidewalk to the restoration area so it was easily accessible for anyone who wanted to check it out (and not end up in shin deep quicksand/mud!). It also looked like the BNWK planted some new native species. (Student 10)

Green runoff blockers along edges of water systems within the cemetery. Restoration projects/literal signs

describing human change that is occurring or will be occurring with roads/walkways and other human associated access points. Increased impact of riparian zone through the use of newly planted plants. (Student 9)

While this was not a concept directly asked in their reflection assignment, students reflected positively about these efforts and through this possibly see their own potential for engaging in social change.

The efforts of local environmental not-for-profit resonated with students as a form of commitment from the community towards environmental and social change. Witnessing commitments such as this provides an opportunity for understanding the importance of action through partnerships of service. Many students mentioned the particular ways in which restorations efforts were taking shape.

The awareness of service as a lifelong, long-term commitment further helps the message resonate beyond the experience as an undergraduate. The hallmarks of our democracy depend on this understanding and the commitment that can follow.

On the topic of theme 5, evaluation and integrity with nature, I chose to focus on one response from the class. In this response, the student clearly ponders the role of our physical and spiritual selves as we enter the balance between life and death.

My belief is our souls are the only part of us that remain after death, our bodies are not important, I do not believe they are significant enough to rot away in a coffin taking up large spaces in the ground. If we continue this process, will there be room for everyone? In some cultures and religions I understand it is a form of respect, especially for important figures who pass away either naturally or through tragedy, but their legacy will live on and people will remember their names. Having a place in the ground with a headstone may be comforting for people, it is a place to go visit a loved one but I do not believe you need to be in

someone's body to be able to connect with them again. Their spirit lives on and can be felt anywhere. The entire time walking through forest lawn, I knew how big it is but I really did not get that feeling until walking through it to understand how large the land actually is. It is just filled with dead bodies taking up space in the ground, so how will they be able to fit more people with the years to come? We are not being environmentally realistic, I understand death is an important to different cultures and is of high importance, I just think we need to think about the reality of burying people. There are so many other ways we can be respectful to people who have passed and create new traditions that are environmentally friendly and still fit in with our religious beliefs or values. I felt connected with the environment and nature, but at the same time it is hard when there are buildings and other things that are not natural to that place. I think it is interesting to what we think is "natural" because we have a construction of what we think nature is. There are so many different places that are preserved for nature but at the same time humans have had touched it, technically it is not "natural." We have a constructed view on what we see as a place that is considered a part of "nature." (Student 6).

In this response, the student has connected a number of key concepts moving towards a true integration and evaluation of human society in the role of nature. They question the role of how we come to be, how we exist on this earthly plane, and how we reconnect to its existence after our physical bodies have lost their ability to carry us. The opportunities to explore these concepts further abound in their response and allow for a greater sense of self to be expressed. A supporting response provides similar sentiment:

Many of the things that were built there did not take away from the natural beauty of the landscape. Most of it was built to either give humans access or for aesthetic purposes. Although it is right on Main

Street once you enter those gates all of the hustle and bustle go away. You no longer hear all of the cars, trucks and busses roaring by. You are immersed in a place of serenity. The church plays songs of bells out of speakers on the bell tower. Many of the headstones and crypts are made right into the sides of the hills and follow the lay of the land. Trashcans and things that stick up out of the ground are covered by wood to make it look more natural. There is an unwritten rule of respect for this place. (Student 4)

Living with integrity with nature offers a sense of enlightenment in a similar way that Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'* does. The recognition that the environmental crisis is one of serious interconnectivity across disciplines as well as a social and moral crisis means our integrity towards nature must serve the common good if it is to do any good at all. Students were able to see the visible strands of our environmental problems as they tangle and weave together into much more complicated realities than what appears at first glance.

### Conclusions

Pope Francis's call in *Laudato Si'* for us to consider climate change and other ecological devastation as central in our reformation of Catholic social teaching is vital. The connection between environmental degradation and economic exploitation must be recognized and acted upon. Climate change denial only serves to hold the economic status quo for those who stand to continually gain monstrous profit through the constant extraction of the earth's non-renewables. Culturally, we must begin to question and act on this. The charge is clear—we need to move beyond the debate and engage in real action for social change. Pope Francis engages those who read and listen to his words. We must carry these words forward into action.

A timely development to this discussion is the recent gathering of the first of three conferences, entitled “‘Laudato Si’ and the U.S. Catholic Church: A Conference Series on Our Common Home,” hosted by Creighton University and the Catholic Climate Covenant. Focusing on issues of systemic institutional change needed across

sectors of our society, including higher education, the Catholic Church, and legislative policy, individuals gathered to share ideas and develop actionable plans for implementing a climate action strategy.

The coming together of individuals representing these areas suggest a deep commitment to combating our climate emergency. Yet this is merely a first step in the potential for social change and justice for the environment.

At Canisius, students are also leading this charge. Opportunities such as this give them space to imagine a different role for themselves as students, instead of listening in a classroom, they can listen and act on their own ideas and create a space for that articulate to percolate. One example of this is our faculty and student Sustainability Initiative through which we have created the East West Community Garden. This has grown from a vision had by students and faculty alike, to an endorsed project by college administration, to partnerships with local community organizations, such as neighborhood associations, refugee resettlement agencies (Somali Bantu, Congolese for example) and local schools. The garden has become a space where physical and spiritual work blooms ideas and relationships. These ideas have articulated in to a space where these connections are real and visible, including the mediation garden and labyrinth, the education and teaching circle, the sensory garden, and the insect and pollinator garden. Each of these spaces has been created with intention to connect in visible ways to the themes of IPP and IPS, context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation; all while allowing for room to explore the role of consolation and desolation.

Our programs are committed to engaging students towards this way of thinking. It is the nature of a Jesuit education to question the world as it is and ask: can it be better? Sociology and environmental studies do this by promoting these ideas in our classes, research opportunities, and internship experiences. As we explore historic academic trajectories such as science as mastery, consumerism as identity, and the self-conscious first person, we need to acknowledge that our thoughts determine how we lead and how we live. We can create our experiences as deliberate

thinkers and ask: is this crisis that we face worth giving up on, for not taking responsibility? To give up independence of thought is to give away your power. Our role as educators is to provide that space for empowerment through thought. We are

committed to engaging the college conversation on these issues in order to move Canisius College in the direction of a sustainable leader among all colleges and universities. HJE

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**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> James L. Leighter and Kathleen R. Smythe, "Ignatian Pedagogy for Sustainability: An Overview," *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* 8, no. 1 (2019): 28-35. <https://epublications.regis.edu/jhe/vol8/iss1/3>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> James Leighter and John O'Keefe, "Ascetical Practice and Ignatian Pedagogy for Sustainability: Tools for Teaching Sustainable Living," *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* 8, no. 1 (2019): 3-11. <https://epublications.regis.edu/jhe/vol8/iss1/2>

<sup>4</sup> Kathleen R. Smythe, "Bicycling Seminar and Ignatian Pedagogy for Sustainability," *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* 8, no. 1 (2019): 21-27. <https://epublications.regis.edu/jhe/vol8/iss1/5/>

<sup>5</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si' Encyclical Letter* (Vatican City, Italy: Libreria Editrice Vatican, 2015), accessed September 5, 2015, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_encyclica-laudato-si\\_en.pdf](https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_encyclica-laudato-si_en.pdf).

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Science News Staff, "Trump Once Again Requests Deep Cuts in U.S. Science Spending," *Science*, March 11, 2019. Accessed May 23, 2019,

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<sup>10</sup> Brendan Brown, "Trump Twitter Archive," accessed May 23, 2019, <http://www.trumptwitterarchive.com/>

<sup>11</sup> Heidi Ledford, Sara Reardon, Emiliano Rodriguez Mega, Jeff Tollefson, Alexandra Witze, "Trump Seeks Big Cuts to Science Funding—Again," *Scientific American*, March 12, 2019, accessed May 23, 2019, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/trump-seeks-big-cuts-to-science-funding-mdash-again/?redirect=1>

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<sup>14</sup> All referenced quotations in this analysis section are from student responses.