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Reflections on the first of the University CORE courses: A journey of transformation and my intended career in nursing

Within this class, we have explored many ideas and made connections to our individual experiences, allowing us to broaden our thinking. We have thoroughly discussed the importance of higher education, even though the components often seem irrelevant to many college students. We have shared our individual opinions about the importance and relevance of higher education, and I have realized that knowledge is power. Success begins with intelligence and an open mind. While not all aspects of college may seem necessary, they prove essential in the future as they provide us with a learned capacity for broad ideas with room for further thought.

My journey as a nursing major has many connections to the real-world application of science and compassion with the human experience. I have discovered a strong link between my future goals in nursing and the ethical, philosophical, and religious subjects we have studied thus far in the course. Plato's Apology and Allegory of the Cave, Msgr. Fahd's Presidential Address, Nostra Aetate, and the Bhagavad Gita are just a few of the texts that have expanded my knowledge of the importance of compassion, empathy, and individual values in the healing process. These concepts highlight the importance of moral integrity, cultural sensitivity, and compassion not only in my future career as a nurse but also in broadening my outlook on the world, which aids in developing my identity as a well-rounded individual.

Broad ranges of concepts that go beyond the scope of conventional nursing education have been connected in our materials and conversations thus far. As I have reflected on my purpose in life, which is to care for people as a nurse, I think about many connections I can make throughout each reading. These readings have raised significant problems concerning human interaction, how people perceive suffering, and individuals' place in the greater community. Asple, Msgr. Fahd's Presidential Address addressed a reflection on human dignity, a fundamental aspect of nursing. Nurses must respect each patient's dignity, regardless of illness or religious beliefs. My understanding of the value of compassion in healthcare and the spiritual aspect of care has been strengthened by Msgr. Fahy's message emphasized the importance of community. This reinforces my view that nursing is about providing care for the spirit, offering emotional support during vulnerable moments, and physical recovery, no matter what a person's circumstances are.

On reading Nostra Aetate, a proclamation from the Second Vatican Council. I was led to contemplate the idea of interreligious conversation and acceptance of numerous religions. To provide compassionate and comprehensive care in a diverse healthcare setting, it is vital to recognize and honor patients' varied spiritual and cultural backgrounds. The appeal of this conversation with people from different backgrounds and faiths emphasizes the significance of empathy and authenticity. These two traits are essential in a nurse-patient interaction when providing care centered on patient comfort. Understanding the religious and cultural contexts of

treatment can significantly influence clinical results since nurses frequently act as the link between patients, their families, doctors, and other healthcare providers.

We have discussed themes that pertain to aspects of nursing, such as the idea of "care" beyond the physical body. Nursing, at its core, involves addressing patients' physical condition and attending to their emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs, as we must consider the whole person. This means a focus on their mind, body, and soul. In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates presents the importance of self-awareness and living a virtuous life, which ties into the idea of nurses practicing self-reflection and ethical conduct in every aspect of care. As a nurse, it will not be enough to follow medical protocols; I must continually examine my practice with humility, integrity, and a sense of responsibility toward my patients and myself. This can be particularly important in moments of moral conflict, where a nurse must balance professional obligations with personal ethics while still ensuring that the patient receives the best care, with their best interests being put forward.

Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* also resonated with me, especially the idea of emerging from the shadows of ignorance into the light of knowledge and understanding. We all know the saying "Ignorance is bliss". That may be true for many situations. In class, I shared that if I were in this position, where all I knew was the cave, then suddenly I was able to go and explore the real world, and then choose whether I wanted to stay or return to the cave, I said I'd probably go back. I don't usually do well with change because it tends to throw my routine off, and getting back on track isn't easy. Change comes in many forms, and in certain situations, change isn't always associated with you directly (in times of loss, relationships, and friendships).

Nevertheless, in those situations, I tend to let my empathy and compassion for others get in the way of myself, which I need to work on, as I get closer to graduating and working as a nurse. I mention this because I feel my calling in life is to care for people, not only in the medical sense, but also to be someone people can turn to in vulnerable times. Nursing is one of those professions where you first provide medical care to individuals, but you also become connected to your patients in special ways, making the work so rewarding. However, this comes with many transitions, and I must prepare for such situations.

The allegory parallels the role of nurses in helping patients "see the light" in times of illness or distress. Just as the prisoner is freed from the cave and presented with a different reality, nurses often help guide patients out of fear, uncertainty, and suffering. Through education, compassion, and empathy, nurses help patients navigate all aspects of their conditions and guide them to make decisions that are best for themselves without pushing them toward further risk or complication. The allegory reminds me of the importance of clear communication and patient education, ensuring that patients fully understand their conditions, the treatments being provided, and every risk that follows each treatment.

Sister Rose's *Passion* also shed light on the conjunction of personal devotion and care. The concept of sacrificial love, as depicted in her story, underlines the emotional depth that nursing can entail. The emotional toll of caring for others, particularly in end-of-life care, is something I must prepare for as a future nurse. It takes a special kind of person who is kind and compassionate, strong, and resilient. Just as Sister Rose's commitment to serving others in faith gave her strength, I recognize that my commitment to compassion and respect for life will be a source of personal strength and resilience in difficult situations. Caring for people at their most vulnerable moments requires a deep emotional reserve and a commitment to healing the body and nurturing the human spirit. Which, I believe, is my purpose in life. The impact a nurse can have on people's lives when

they are alone in a hospital with no other support draws me to the healthcare profession so deeply, from seeing for myself what nurses can do for others and their loved ones. It is about being a nurturing caregiver who provides patients with hope during their most vulnerable and difficult times, and I firmly believe that this is what I was meant to do for others.

The Bhagavad Gita reading was challenging since it explained the connection between accountability, compassion, and personal growth. Arjun's internal dispute is a powerful reminder of the daily ethical dilemmas healthcare professionals face as he battles his moral obstacles on the battlefield. The Gita promotes disconnecting from the implications of one's actions, suggesting that obligation, whether as a nurse or a warrior, requires an understanding that the outcome is not always under our control despite our very best efforts. This can be associated with the limitations of caring for patients in critical condition. Even in situations where the results are uncertain, I will need to act with firm dedication as a nurse and find joy in serving every day, no matter how hard it gets, because primarily, that is the job.

Nostra Aetate encourages respect for all human life, regardless of religious or cultural differences. In nursing, this invokes the importance of cultural acceptance irrespective of personal beliefs. Diverse patient populations in healthcare environments mean that a nurse must understand medical science and be attuned to the emotional and spiritual needs of individuals from various backgrounds. Learning about the world's philosophies will better equip us to offer patient-centered care that aligns with their values and beliefs. This might mean accommodating prayer times, respecting dietary restrictions, or simply being mindful of how faith can play a role in a patient's visions.

The lessons from these readings have deepened my reflections on the ethical aspects of my future nursing career. I have realized that nursing is not just about technical skills but also about being present meaningfully for each patient. A nurse must learn to care for the whole person, recognizing health's emotional, psychological, and spiritual components, which will look different for everyone. As I prepare for my career, I realize that I must develop not only my clinical skills but also my emotional intelligence and ability to empathize with patients from all occupations. I have been encouraged to think critically about integrating compassion and respect for diverse belief systems into my daily work.

The readings have reinforced my desire to work in environments where patients' dignity is upheld at all stages of their care, from birth to death. This aligns with my long-term career ambition of working in a hospital where patients need an advocate. Understanding the philosophical and theological perspectives on suffering, compassion, and the afterlife has given me a more profound sense of purpose in this field, motivating me to approach my patients with an awareness of their personal beliefs and cultural values.