

Meet a Muslim student who asks, “How can I help the faith of my Christian brothers and sisters?”

University life inevitably opens students to a world of new experiences and ideas.

This has been the case for Australian Catholic University (ACU) Ballarat Campus final year Bachelor of Nursing student, Hadi Sulieman.

“I grew up in a Muslim family and I am still very Muslim. I hadn’t had many conversations with Catholics and campus life at Australian Catholic University in Ballarat has offered many opportunities for that.”

Hadi volunteered for ACU Campus Ministry’s Frontier program, curious about what it offered and encouraged by friends who were involved.

ACU’s innovative Frontier program was launched in early 2018 with the intention of forming faith-inspired student teams that engage and inspire the wider student community. The program has since grown in popularity across every ACU campus.

“I was fascinated. I fell in love with the concept of sitting with like-minded people and discussing theology. It intrigued me.”

Hadi was soon offered a position as a Student Ministry Assistant, which he accepted. He dedicates seven hours a fortnight to this role, often running Connect groups, “where we talk about Catholic values and beliefs – why do people believe? – and Sunset Sessions which offer more scope to explore.

“I didn’t come to university thinking I was going to dive deeply into spirituality, but that’s what’s happened.”

Some might be intrigued by a devout Muslim ministering at ACU. But for Hadi, there has never been a conflict.

“Absolutely not. Fundamentally, all the Abrahamic religions share the same core beliefs. The differences don’t affect me significantly. Being at a Catholic university has bolstered my Islamic beliefs because discussions are open and practicing faith isn’t setting yourself apart, as it was in my public school. This campus community welcomes the idea of being religious.

“The best way to learn is to teach, so I feel I learn a lot more about my own religion by answering other students’ questions. I think I help the more well-versed Catholics by asking very simplistic questions; they might have thought the answers were just common knowledge.

“My approach is always, ‘How can I help the faith of my Christian brothers and sisters?’ I wish everyone had that approach.”

Hadi is clearly open to all that ACU offers and generous in contributing his gifts, qualities that will no doubt stand him in good stead as he pursues a nursing career.

“I view Campus Ministry as the moral, ethical glue of university life and I try to promote the four Bs: Belonging, Becoming, Believing and Being supported.”

While he was unsure about his career path initially, he says now, “The more I do it, the more I love it.”

Hadi moved from Hobart to study at ACU Ballarat.

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