

# VOCATION AMBASSADORS



# NRVC

National Religious  
Vocation Conference

**WHAT:** SHARE THE SACRED, 4-DAY WORKSHOP

**WHERE:** HOLY CROSS COLLEGE, SOUTH BEND, INDIANA

**WHEN:** WORKSHOP COMMENCES JUNE 9, 5 P.M.; CONCLUDES: JUNE 12, NOON

**APPLICATION REGISTRATION:** OPENS FEB. 1, 2017; CLOSES MARCH 25, 2017

## What does the Vocation Ambassadors Program involve?

Using the *Share the Sacred* workshop, fourteen selected teams of vocation ministers, communicators, and single, Catholic young adults (ages 20-30), work together to develop a consistent message that vocations to religious life is a viable option in the Catholic Church. By 'sharing the sacred' teams work together to bridge gaps of knowledge and experience to create a collaborative communications strategic plan for vocations that involves a minimum of 100 team hours beyond the *Share the Sacred* workshop. All team members are commissioned as Vocation Ambassadors at the concluding prayer service.

## What are the program fees?

Underwritten by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, all workshop materials, speaker fees, accommodations, and meals will be covered. All participants will be responsible for their own personal expenses and travel to/from Holy Cross College. Each team needs at least one smart phone and laptop.

## Where will this be held?

All participants will be housed in a residence hall on campus. Holy Cross College, South Bend, IN, is located in the mid-west, easily accessible by car or plane. If you want to fly, the South Bend Airport (SBN), is just 5 miles from campus, so you can either rent a car or take a taxi to/from the campus. The Chicago O'Hare Airport (ORD) and Chicago Midway (MDW) are approximately two hours west of Notre Dame.

## What are the goals of this workshop?

The three goals of the *Share the Sacred* workshop are:

- To enhance communication skills and share media content with a consistent message that vocations to religious life is a viable option in the Catholic Church;
- To share and offer a comprehensive approach to promote all forms of religious life while encouraging inquirers and seekers to learn more about the spirituality, mission, core values, and charism of your religious institute; and

- To create a collaborative communications strategic plan for vocations at the conclusion of the workshop that can be implemented by the team members beyond the workshop.

Workshops may include the following, depending on the skill level of participants and the willingness to teach others: podcasting, sacred conversations, online advertising and analytics; mobile app development; creating attractive visuals: photos, infographics, free online tools, and diverse prayer experiences drawing from the varied charisms and spirituality of participating religious institutes.

### Who can apply for the Vocation Ambassadors Program?

Participants in the Vocation Ambassadors Program will be selected as a team from an application submitted by an NRVC member who has a single membership or is part of a license. The vocation minister must be an NRVC member who has some experience in social media and has previously attended the NRVC Orientation Program for Vocation Directors workshop. The communicator and young adult do not have to be NRVC members.

The contact information for the single Catholic between the ages 20-30, does not have to be submitted until after the team has been selected. These selected young adults will be commissioned as Vocation Ambassadors after the completion of the *Share the Sacred* workshop and be committed to the 100 team hours after the workshop.

Participation is limited to 14 teams from a variety of religious institutes for women and men. Team members need not be the same gender. All three team members must attend all four days of the workshop and participate fully by networking, attending all workshops, and sharing knowledge with other participants. The team is expected to work together for an additional 100 hours to develop and implement a communications strategy to promote vocations.

### NRVC member applicants need to possess the following skills:

- A willingness to be inclusive, respectful, and collaborative with people of different communication styles, lived experiences, educational skills, and cultural backgrounds.
- An understanding of the diversity in religious life and enthusiastically promote it.
- An interest in working creatively with social media and an inclination to share knowledge with others.
- A desire to create a realistic strategic plan for communications for your religious institute.
- An ease at conversing with inquirers using cultural competence and intercultural awareness.
- An ability to articulate your own vocation story in a variety of platforms.
- A basic understanding of the ethics of vocation ministry and ethics of social media.
- A willingness to submit a report of progress and initiatives accomplished by May 1, 2018.

### Expectations of the vocation minister if selected to participate:

- Attend the entire *Share the Sacred* workshop and participate fully by networking, attending all workshops, and sharing knowledge with other participants.

- As the team leader, collaborate with the vocation ambassador and communicator to create or enhance a collaborative communications strategic plan for vocations.
- As the team leader, provide written evaluation and feedback to NRVC regarding the progress on your team initiatives in a timely manner.
- With the communicator, select a young adult as the vocation ambassador for your team.
- Determine the parameter of the vocation ambassador's minimum commitment of 100 hours including starting and ending dates, working hours, and schedule. For example, a university student might be interested if offered a 10 week daily internship completed in one semester to add this ministerial experience to a professional resume or to volunteer for school credit OR a vocation ambassador who is already employed full-time may want a part-time experience of several hours a week over six months.
- Determine compensation, if any, for the vocation ambassador. Depending on the congregation's resources and the project undertaken, various compensation models might be used:
  1. Volunteer position with limited hours, uncompensated
  2. Internship position with stipend
  3. Internship position providing room & board, with or without stipend
  4. Part-time employment at negotiated hourly rate
  5. Part-time employment at negotiated project stipend rate
- Provide the vocation ambassador with access to resources and tools necessary for completion of the communications plan.
- Provide any additional training, insight, and resources to the vocation ambassador and communicator after the workshop regarding religious life and your religious institute.
- An openness to receiving on-going training needed in social media and communication skills.

### Expectations of the communicator if selected to participate:

The communicator may be the religious institute's Communications Director or another designated staff member/vowed member with recognized experience in communications.

- Attend the entire *Share the Sacred* workshop and participate fully by networking, attending all workshops, and sharing knowledge with other participants.
- Collaborate with the vocation minister and vocation ambassador during and after the workshop with an additional 100 hours for a collaborative communications plan.
- With the vocation minister, select the vocation ambassador.
- Provide coaching and mentoring during the workshop as needed, to enhance training in social media and communications skills of all participants.

- Assist in the planning and execution of the project/plan, including integrating it into the congregation's overall communications strategy and processes.
- Provide additional training, insight, and resources as needed to the vocation ambassador and vocation minister regarding the collaborative communications strategy.
- Provide feedback and evaluation to NRVC regarding the Vocation Ambassadors program for inclusion in the vocation minister's report.

### Expectations of the young adults if selected to participate:

The young adult to be commissioned as a vocation ambassador must know the vocation director prior to attending the *Share the Sacred* workshop. The vocation ambassador must be a single Catholic between the ages of 20-30 and may include those in extended volunteer programs, work study students, associate members, and leaders in pastoral ministries. Vocation ambassadors cannot be candidates in initial formation or newly professed members.

- Attend the entire *Share the Sacred* workshop and participate fully by networking, attending all workshops, and sharing knowledge with other participants.
- Collaborate with the vocation minister and communicator during and after the workshop with an additional 100 hours for a collaborative communications plan.
- Receive on-going training as needed in the nature and purpose of religious life in general, and the congregation's mission, spirituality, and charism in particular.
- Collaborate with the vocation minister and communicator in the formulation and implementation of the communications project/plan.
- Provide feedback and evaluation to NRVC regarding the Vocation Ambassadors program for inclusion in the vocation minister's report.

### Application deadline

Applications will be accepted until midnight on March 25. All applicants will be notified by April 5 of acceptance or placement on a waiting list. If a selected team is unable to attend, they must notify NRVC as soon as possible. NRVC reserves the right to select another team from the established waiting list of applicants.

### Rationale for the Vocation Ambassadors Program

Because of the paucity of younger religious in the United States, the common perception of religious is that they are all elderly. Although the witness of senior religious continues to inspire, if a community is looking to attract younger members, having a younger face speak on the virtues of religious life or of a particular religious institute helps to capture the imagination of younger inquirers and seekers. Many religious institutes have relationships with young adults whose faith and lives have been profoundly influenced by the members or charism of their religious community. While they may not have a

religious vocation themselves, these women and men choose to affiliate with the congregation either informally through their ongoing friendships and support, or more formally, for instance, through associate or oblate programs.

The Vocation Ambassadors Program is geared to capitalize on the devoted goodwill of those who, because they have received so much from a particular religious community, desire to give back to this community by helping to promote their life with a newer generation.

Styled after *Catholic Voices* ([www.catholicvoices.org.uk](http://www.catholicvoices.org.uk)), which began in the United Kingdom to improve the Church's representation in the media by engaging committed lay Catholics, the Vocation Ambassadors Program will train younger, adult Catholics in media and communications so that they can effectively communicate to other young Catholics about why this community and their members are valuable to the Church and to the People of God. The Ambassadors will eventually assist the vocation minister and communicator on a volunteer basis with come and see weekends, discernment retreats, volunteer immersion experiences, classroom and parish presentations, etc. The intent of this program is not to replace the voice or role of a permanently vowed religious, vocation minister, or communicator; instead, it is meant to complement their message with the witness of what this valued vocation means to one who is younger and has benefited from their vowed life of prayer, witness, and generous service.

The long-term vision of this program is to create a community of ambassadors and to identify strong leaders who could possibly assist in the planning and direction of future ambassador programs. NRVC's ongoing communication with ambassadors would include updates and possible participation in future programming. Although the goal of this program is not to recruit the ambassadors for religious life, their participation in the program however lends itself to consideration of the possibility.

### Anticipated outcomes for the Vocation Ambassador program

- Create a network of young adults who are skilled in communication and media and who are willing to advocate publicly for and to speak on behalf of religious vocations and a particular, religious institute.
- Provide further opportunity for NRVC members for much needed media and communication training, essential tools for effective, contemporary vocation ministry.
- Creatively bridge the generation gap in vocation ministry between aging religious and young adults.
- Engage other partners, including younger laity, in assuming active responsibility for the future of religious life.
- Broaden the base of professional support for NRVC members and their institutes in their ministry.
- Serve as a springboard for learning in other possible communication/media venues in the future.

### Concluding message

This is the second year NRVC has offered the Vocation Ambassadors Program. A comprehensive news [article](#) was written by Elizabeth Elliott from Global Sisters Report. We are confident that the participants

in the Vocation Ambassadors Program will play an important role in ensuring the future of religious life. Please direct any questions to Deborah M. Borneman, SS.C.M., NRVC Director of Member Relations and Services, at [debbiesscm@nrv.net](mailto:debbiesscm@nrv.net).