

VOCATION AMBASSADORS



NRVC

National Religious
Vocation Conference

WHAT: SHARE THE SACRED, 4-DAY WORKSHOP

WHERE: HOLY CROSS COLLEGE, NOTRE DAME, INDIANA

WHEN: WORKSHOP COMMENCES JUNE 10, 4 P.M.; CONCLUDES: JUNE 13, NOON

REGISTRATION: OPENS FEB. 1, 2016; CLOSES MARCH 15, 2016

Do you want to learn relevant, practical, and affordable marketing strategies that you can implement immediately to promote vocations to religious life? NRVC wants to create a network of young adults who will be commissioned as Vocation Ambassadors and equipped with media training and communication skills to represent and to promote religious life in the Church and to the general public. All program materials, accommodations, meals, and presenter fees will be underwritten by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. Selected participants will be responsible for personal expenses and travel to and from Holy Cross College for this summer workshop.

What does the Vocation Ambassadors Program involve?

Using a four-day workshop called *Share the Sacred*, fourteen selected teams of vocation ministers, communicators, and Catholic young adults (ages 20-30), will work together to develop a consistent message about vocations to religious life as a viable option in the Catholic Church. The Vocation Ambassadors Program will bridge gaps of knowledge and experience by assisting team members to create a collaborative communications strategic plan for vocations that involves a minimum of 100 team hours beyond the *Share the Sacred* workshop.

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. All participants must bring a personal laptop/tablet and each team needs at least one smart phone.

Where will this workshop be held?

The *Share the Sacred* workshop will be held at Holy Cross College at Notre Dame, IN. All participants will be housed in a residence hall on campus. The closest airport is the South Bend Airport (SBN), however Chicago O'Hare Airport (ORD) and Chicago Midway (MDW) are approximately two hours west of Notre Dame. While taxi service is available at the South Bend airport, if you fly to Chicago, Coach Bus Lines operates a bus service for both ORD and MDW to/from campus.

When will the workshop be held?

Registration and arrival is scheduled for Friday, June 10, from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. The *Share the Sacred* workshop begins promptly at 4:00 p.m. and concludes at noon on Monday, June 13. All three team members must attend all four days of this workshop.

What are the expectations of this inaugural Vocation Ambassadors Program?

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

- To enhance communication skills to develop a consistent message about vocations to religious life as a viable option in the Catholic Church;
- To understand a comprehensive approach to promote all forms of religious life while encouraging inquirers and seekers to learn more about your spirituality, mission, core values, and charism of your religious institute; and
- To create a collaborative communications strategic plan for vocations that can be implemented by the team members within 100 hours beyond the *Share the Sacred* workshop.

The expectation of a collaborative communications strategic plan for vocations includes developing media content to promote all of religious life, (not just for the particular religious institutes selected to attend this program) that will benefit NRVC by providing new and relevant resources on a regular and ongoing basis. With a forum for teams to share ideas among themselves and then, offer their program ideas and media materials to NRVC to share with all of its members, this Vocation Ambassadors program has the potential to impact wider audiences as digital, downloadable resources are shared throughout the country in a timely approach.

Workshop sessions may include the following, depending on the skill level of participants and 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. The NRVC member may hold a single membership or be part of a license, however only one application per license may be submitted. Participation is limited to 14 teams from a variety of religious institutes for women and men. The application must include the contact information of a vocation minister and a communicator who is currently working with the NRVC member in their religious institute. 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 Catholic young adult 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. 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, 2017.

Expectations of the vocation minister if selected to participate:

- Attend all four days of the *Share the Sacred* workshop and participate fully by networking, attending all workshop sessions, and sharing knowledge with other participants.
- Lead the collaboration with the vocation ambassador and communicator in a 100 minimum commitment to a collaborative communications strategic plan.
- 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 all four days of the *Share the Sacred* workshop and participate fully by networking, attending all workshop sessions, 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 young adult to be trained as a 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 congregations 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 adult if selected to participate:

The vocation minister must know the young adult prior to attending the *Share the Sacred* workshop. The young adult must be a 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. The selected young adults will be commissioned as vocation ambassadors at the conclusion of the Share the Sacred workshop. Vocation Ambassadors cannot be candidates in initial formation or newly professed members.

- Attend all four days of the *Share the Sacred* workshop and participate fully by networking, attending all workshop sessions, 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 15. All applicants will be notified by March 31 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. This program is intended to become part of the regular NRVC annual programming after its pilot year. The long term vision of this program is to create a community of Vocation Ambassadors and to identify strong leaders who could possibly assist in the planning and direction of future Vocation Ambassador Programs.

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), 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 Vocation Ambassadors will eventually assist the vocation minister and communicator in a 100 hour commitment by creating a collaborative communications plan for vocations which may include 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 Vocation Ambassadors and to identify strong leaders who could possibly assist in the planning and direction of future Vocation Ambassador Programs. NRVC's ongoing communication with Vocation 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 Ambassadors 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 from the Vocation Ambassadors Program design team

We hope that you will apply to be a part of this new program. Successful vocation ministry integrates leadership, vocations, communicators, and young Catholics. 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.

Thank you to the design team members: Sister Deborah Borneman, SS.C.M. project coordinator; Ms. Miranda Caulkins (Communicator with the Adorers of the Blood of Christ); Ms. Debbi Della Porta (Communicator with the Sisters of Mercy); Sister June Fitzgerald, O.P.; Father Adam MacDonald, S.V.D.; Ms. Valerie Oltmanns (Communicator with the Felician Sisters); Father Larry Rice, C.S.P.; and Sister Theresa Sullivan, D.C.