

JESUS EXTENDED A SIMPLE INVITATION – NOW IT'S OUR TURN

“Hi, I like your dress, where'd you get it?”

IN THE SPIRIT



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I say these words quickly as the college student behind me leaves her pew, walking toward the exit.

“I’m not quite sure, but do I know you?” she responds.

Knowing that we’ve never met, I introduce myself to Maggie, a freshman at Grand Valley State University (GVSU).

I tell her that I’m a missionary with FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) and share a little about my family and hometown.

Within minutes, I learn that Maggie comes to Sunday Mass by herself and desires to make her faith a priority in college.

Starting the conversation with a compliment, the conversation ends with an invitation to my weekly Bible study for freshmen. Little did I know that one simple interaction with Maggie would lead to her seizing many opportunities later in the semester to reconnect with her Catholic faith.

All it took was a simple invitation.

While reflecting on John 1:35-51, it’s evident that the first disciples were drawn to Jesus! These men wanted to know more about him following the bold proclamation of John the Baptist that Jesus is the Lamb of God.

More intimately, after a brief interaction with the supposed Messiah, the disciples ask Jesus: “Rabbi, where are you staying?”

It’s easy to see that the first disciples were intrigued by Jesus, but weren’t certain what following this man would mean for their livelihoods. Knowing fears and anxieties would creep up, Jesus begins the process with a simple invitation: “Come, and you will see.”

Similar to the disciples, one must be met with encouragement and an invitation to begin the oftentimes unforeseen process that goes into achieving a relationship or any goal in life.

“All it took was a simple invitation.”

During my time at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, while earning my degree in business administration, I encountered peers and FOCUS missionaries who proclaimed the Gospel through the radiance of their lives. These friends loved me with the heart of Jesus, gently inviting me to integrate daily prayer, Mass, adoration, confession, Bible studies and FOCUS retreats into my “busy” college schedule.

Through the witness of my friends in college and others throughout my life, I now have the honor to walk with many GVSU students in their quest to grow in a relationship with God, while coaching them to lead others on campus.

This fall, I am joined by nearly 800 FOCUS missionaries who serve at 175 locations. This includes 11 parishes across the U.S. and seven international campuses. Out of these 800 missionaries, GVSU has four full-time missionaries spreading the truth, beauty and goodness of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church to souls on campus.

Meeting students during COVID helped me to realize that the most important aspect of discipleship is meeting students where they are and simply inviting them into the normal moments of life. This allows students to “come and see” the ways in which the Lord is working in the everyday moments of life and see the ways that he is transforming their own life.

Whether it’s grabbing iced mocha coffees downtown, studying in the library or attending daily Mass at St. Luke’s, students gradually become aware of the ways that the Lord is personally inviting them into a deeper relationship with him through the Catholic Church.

At the end of the day, simplicity is key in advancing the Gospel. May we never grow weary of inviting others into our lives so as to encounter the living Lord. †

Conversation starters

- * Ask questions about family and friends – it’s always nice to learn about the people who are important in this person’s life!
- * Ask people about the joys in their life! “What are three things that have brought you joy in the last week?” The joys of life allow us to experience a piece of heaven on earth!
- * What are you passionate about? Our passions come from the Lord! Talking about a person’s interests can allow them to realize the goodness and beauty that the Lord has infused in them.