



FOCUS Alumni: Launched into Lifelong Catholic Mission

The “Main Thing” of the Fellowship of Catholic University Students states that the ultimate goal of FOCUS is to launch students — and consequently missionaries — into lifelong Catholic mission. FOCUS exists to create and multiply disciples of Jesus Christ so that every person is known, loved and cared for.

The FOCUS Alumni Relations department connects, inspires and equips FOCUS alumni with ongoing experiences, tools and resources as they endeavor to live out lifelong Catholic mission. The team currently serves more than 20,000 FOCUS alumni, including former students and, who after graduation have the opportunity to move into parish life to continue their missionary work. Within this number, more than 660 have made decisions to pursue Catholic religious vocations. By 2022, FOCUS expects — God willing — to have 75,000 students transitioned into many of America’s 17,000+ Catholic parishes.

Please visit <https://focusoncampus.org/alumni> and <http://www.focus.org/what-we-do/lifelong-mission> to learn more.

Marriage and Parish Evangelization

In 2015, FOCUS awarded the first-ever St. Francis Xavier Award for excellence in living the New Evangelization to Brittany and Brandon Diegel. Both served as FOCUS missionaries and now lead others through their mentorship of married couples in their Bible studies.

Brittany was involved with FOCUS while earning her degree in education at the University of Northern Colorado. Brandon studied mechanical engineering at Colorado State University and was active with FOCUS on campus. The couple met through mutual friends, and following graduation they dedicated two years as FOCUS missionaries. In 2008, Brittany served at Benedictine College and Brandon was at South Dakota State. They were married the following summer and served at the University of South Dakota together.

In 2010, they moved to Omaha where they started a Bible study across the diocese for married and engaged young adults. After trying a variety of formats, they settled on having men and women meet on alternating weeks; all the study participants go on a date night every couple of months. Brittany also started a women’s Bible study and led a study on prayer. After four years in Omaha, they moved to Colorado. Because of the Diegels’ strong discipleship, another couple in Omaha is still leading the Bible studies there.

The Diegels took their first year in Colorado to get to know other couples and to meet with the pastor of their church, St. Augustine Catholic Parish in Brighton, Colorado. In 2015, they started a Bible study and have ten active couples, some of whom are converts to the faith. Brittany said their work is similar to their time with FOCUS on campus: They pray that whomever they’re supposed to encounter, they’ll encounter. Brittany shared that, “We meet people after Mass, and our pastor encourages couples to get involved as well.”

In their own family, the Diegels share their faith with their four sons. They live in a liturgical way, teaching them how to pray and modeling reverence for the sacraments. Like the couples in their Bible study, they are living out the Great Commission and are conveying the importance of developing a relationship with Jesus in an authentic way.

Evangelization in the Workplace

Like many young adults who have grown up in a Catholic family, Hillary Camp knew the rules of the Church and followed them most of the time. Her perspective of her faith changed after encountering FOCUS missionaries at the University of Texas-Austin while earning her nursing degree.



Hillary shared that, “They showed me the beauty of the Church. Before college, I loved Jesus, but I didn't quite understand the ‘rules’ of the Church. The missionaries helped me understand the love behind the tradition.”

On campus, Hillary hosted Bible studies and brought several others closer to Christ. One of her disciples is now a FOCUS missionary, and another will start as a missionary in the fall of 2016. Hillary went on a FOCUS mission trip 2014 to Calcutta, where she used her training to dress wounds. During that trip, she “learned to see Jesus and adore him in all souls.”

After graduating, Hillary returned to her hometown of Houston and now works as a pediatric pulmonary nurse at Texas Children’s Hospital. Families of patients and co-workers frequently ask her why she is so happy, and she uses the opportunity to talk about Jesus with them. She wears a miraculous medal that sparks conversations. When Hillary was chosen as the “spotlight employee” for the hospital’s newsletter, she mentioned the impact her faith has on her life.

She shares her faith with co-workers and has encouraged at least one to start attending Mass regularly and join a Bible study. One of her agnostic co-workers asked her about the steps he should take if he wanted to start going to Catholic Mass.

With her heart open and the Holy Spirit guiding her words, Hillary finds opportunities to evangelize with neighbors near her apartment complex. In addition, she teaches confirmation classes at the parish where she grew up and leads a Bible study with young adults in the parish she attends now. She has also inspired her parents to become more involved with the parish and to deepen their faith through adoration. Her dad now serves as an usher and Eucharistic minister, and her mom became a Eucharistic minister. Hillary’s example of following Christ’s call to disciple others has made an impact on everyone around her!

Religious Vocations and Outreach Evangelization

Father Brian Larkin grew up Catholic, but he almost left the Church after being involved with another college ministry when he started at the University of Colorado-Boulder as an accounting major in 1998. In the fall of his sophomore year, he met John Zimmer, who is now vice president of apostolic development with FOCUS but who at that time was one of the first FOCUS missionaries on campus.

“Until I met John, I had never met a young Catholic who really loved Jesus and knew his faith. I had a lot of questions about the Catholic faith, and John was the first person who could answer them using Scripture.” Larkin became Zimmer’s disciple and was involved with FOCUS through his senior year.

Larkin felt an initial pull to priesthood during his senior year of college, but he fought it. He became a FOCUS missionary — and by the end of his first year of service, he had made the decision to enter the seminary. He said his heart started to change as he learned how to pray, and God revealed a deeper desire within him. “Vocation is about surrendering your life, and FOCUS teaches you how to be generous — challenges you to be generous in a way nothing else will.”

After being ordained in 2011 from St. John Vianney Seminary in Denver, Fr. Larkin served at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Northglenn, Colorado, and then in 2014 was transferred to Our Lady of Lourdes in Denver. The number of parishioners at Our Lady of Lourdes has doubled in size since he’s arrived due in part to his outreach efforts. Fr. Larkin started Bible studies in 2015 and has 100 young adults led by a dozen small group leaders, some of whom are FOCUS employees from the Denver Support Center.